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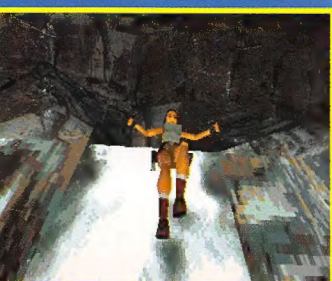
VOLUME 4 ISSUE 12
DECEMBER 1996

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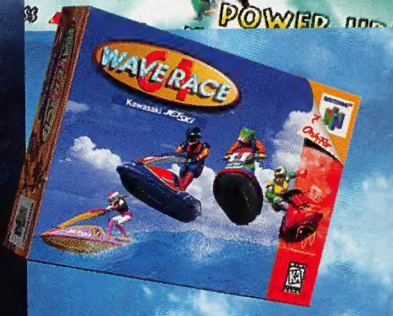
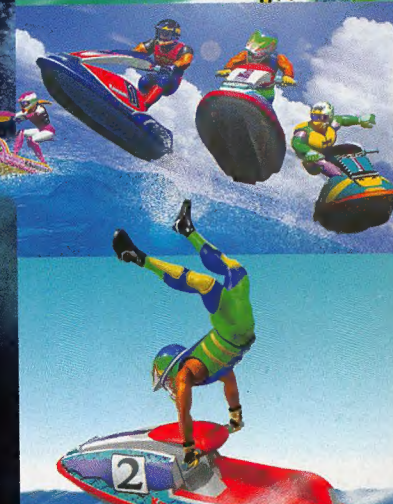
enough to surf and

enough ocean to make a

sailor lose his lunch,

don't forget your life

vest. You'll need it.



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GAMEFAN
original art by:



TERRY "THE
CHARACTER
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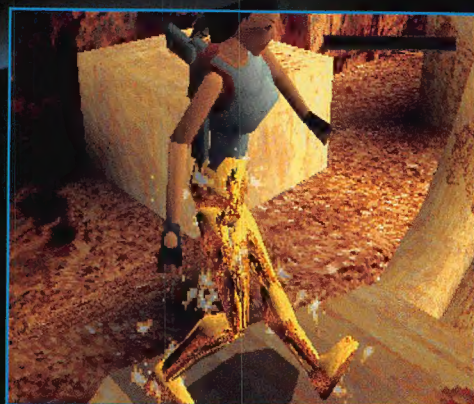
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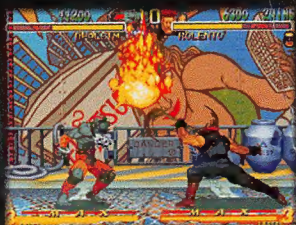
EPIC...
CORE'S TOMB RAIDER FOR THE
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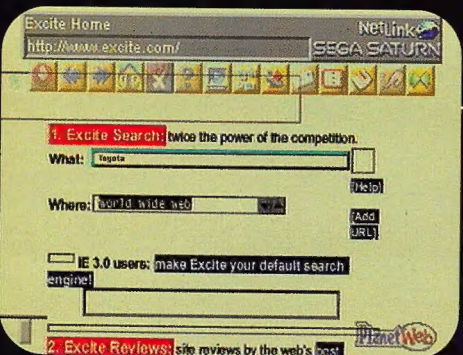
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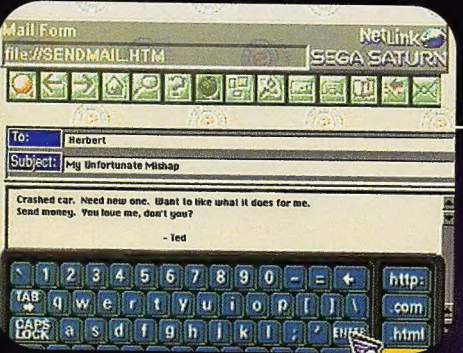
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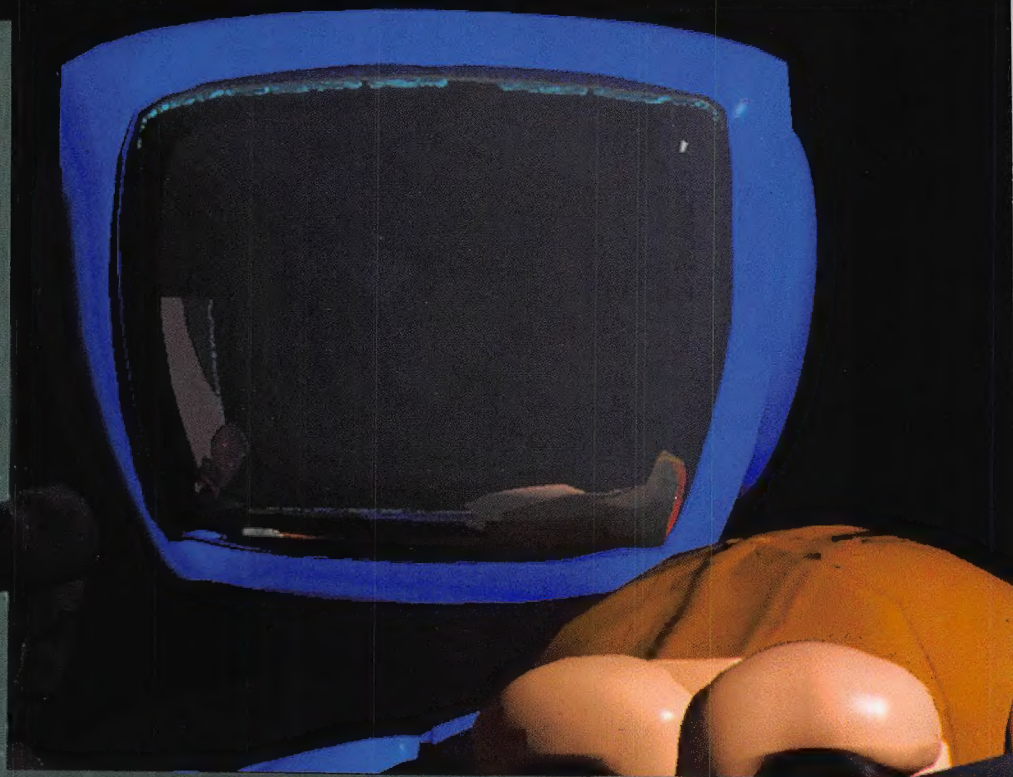
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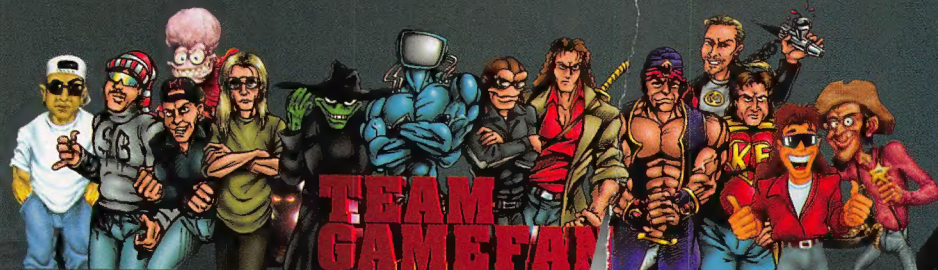
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I'm thinking about a recent innovation that may turn out to be beneficial in more ways than one. I'm talking about Sega's Net Link for the Saturn. So often I'm confronted with individuals who, for one reason or another, have no access to the growing universe of on-line entertainment and information (and therefore GF online if I may grossly plug our wares). For many, a PC is simply not in the budget, and there are those, I'm sure, who find it difficult to justify such a costly item for internet use alone. At any rate, with Sega's new device, connection to on-line services is now not only affordable but can be implemented perched on the sofa in front of the family TV. Not to mention the fact that you can play a plethora of hot titles on your new Saturn as well. The other benefit of this new product is that it may bolster the Saturn user base and thus attract more and better 3rd party support. Sega will need all the help they can get in the months to come going up against the likes of Sony and Nintendo.

My apologies if I sound like a Sega commercial, "SEGA!" I just think it's exciting that alternative means for internet access are being introduced, and made more affordable. I'd say "Merry Christmas" but it's the middle of November. Enjoy the issue!

Dave Halverson



PLAYSTATION

KING'S FIELD II™

The King Is Back, But His Field Has Changed!

No more Mr. Nice King! He's working for the dark side now! King Alfred, the Holy King of Verdite has fallen victim to the minions of evil as ASCII Entertainment brings in another installment of last winter's hit PlayStation title *King's Field*!

In *King's Field II*, you will find the same gripping elements you found in the first *King's Field*, only with even **MORE** of the fantastic elements that addicted you to the original.

An awesome new world lies before you as you embark on your new quest. ASCII obviously put in an incredible amount of work to make this new quest in the kingdom of Verdite as lavish and realistic as possible. This realism stems from the same technology that was used in *King's Field I*, but this time, you have the entirety of the kingdom to explore!



Outdoors, inside castles, villages, underground passages and dungeons — all combine to make an immense world that will have you immersed within moments.

Make no mistake, this is no ordinary sequel. Numerous upgrades and captivating elements mix with the most addictive points of the original top-selling adventure to bring you the hottest new title to hit the PlayStation this year.

As you may recall from the first *King's Field*, a 3D texture-mapped, 360° world of larger-than-life enemies lay before you on the monster infested island of Melanat.

Shipwrecked on this island, you were to battle your way through levels upon levels of dungeons and monsters in search of the Moonlight Sword which was stolen from the King's Throne in Verdite (the kingdom on the mainland).

Your character, Alexander, learned magic spells, grew more skilled with his sword, and was able to pick up and equip any weapons,

armor, or items found on the island. All of the elements of a winning RPG were packed into a first-person, Action/Adventure outer shell — bringing a very unique game to the genre which held the attention of most everyone. With vast improvements over the first, *King's Field II* is bound to share the same success story!

One of the most riveting elements of the new quest is that the storyline has been greatly improved upon! I know that a lot of us thought that the first *King's Field* was plenty deep, but ASCII has gone above and beyond to make this sequel an experience that will draw you deep into the involved plot — disabling you from putting down your controller until every last *Red Eye*, *DragoNewt*, and *Stool* are driven from the kingdom!

You start out the game with an introduction which allows you the chance to find out what has been happening since *Alexander* brought back the Moonlight Sword to the kingdom of Verdite five years ago. A cool intro



sequence complete with voice over and full-motion cinematics bring you into the world as the King's son, *Prince Austin Lyle Forester*, a title that should have everyone in the kingdom bowing to kiss your feet. Unfortunately, your father — *King John Alfred Forester I* — has fallen to the will of the evil forces which are attacking your kingdom.

PUBLISHED BY		RELEASE DATE	
ASCII Entertainment		Halloween '96	
SYSTEM		THEME	
PlayStation		Action/Adventure RPG	
# OF PLAYERS	SIZE	% COMPLETE	
1	CD-ROM	95%	





As you progress through the game to go out and save the world, you will have to talk to all walks of life in the kingdom. Eccentric Monks, irate mothers, indifferent soldiers, even an occasional enraged monster will have a few words for you. Your challenge, of course, is to win the favor of the people so that they will give you the help you need as you try to learn new spells

"It's so addictive, they'll have to cut the power to my house to get me to stop playing!"

— Game Tester

of magic, pass over rivers of lava, and collect threads of power that can sew your kingdom back together.

Don't get me wrong, this is no "rocking at home with your crochet needles" game we're talking about! You'll come up against some of the most frightening and powerful enemies since Clash of the Titans!

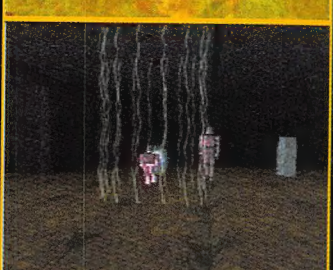
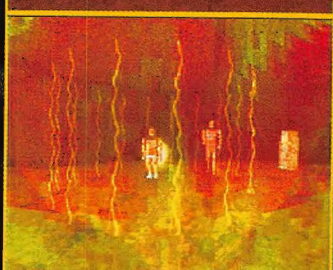
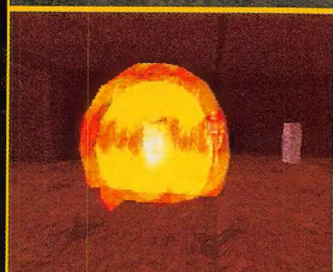
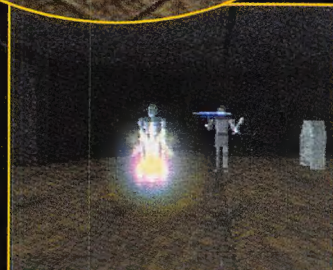
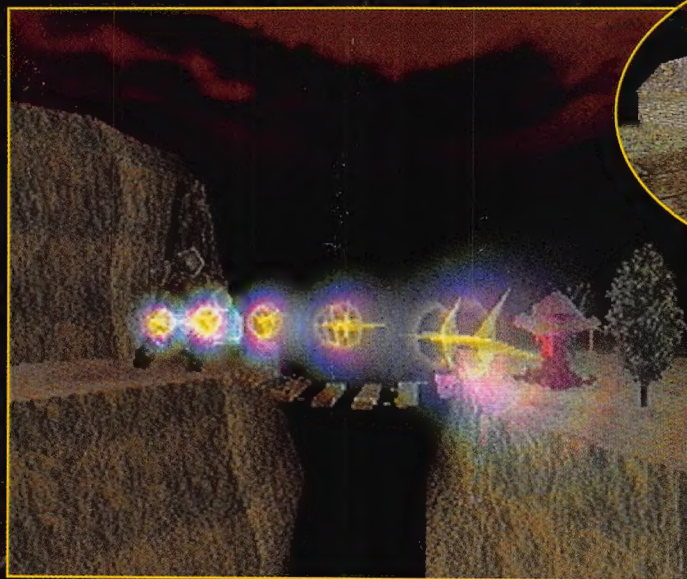
In addition to the game's storyline, ASCII has also put forth a valiant effort to come up with humorous and stimulating dialog and characters to bring your quest to life. Such characters as Jack, a 100+ year old resident of Verdite with a more than stereotypical attitude and a funny senility about

him, will bring sparks of humor that you'll enjoy throughout the game! Even a bit of romance enters the quest as the scantily clad elf merchant, Lyn — who has held a flame for the prince since childhood — drops hints about her feelings that even a Golem could comprehend.

Not to forget about the CD quality sound, of course! King's Field II has a wide selection of accompanying music to entreat your ears as you progress along your journey. Original scores are long enough to not sound repetitive and yet are not so intruding as to distract from the ambiance which they so artfully bring to the game. Other sound effects include terri-



Remember me? Shore ya do...it's Leon Shore. Come visit my house whenever you need a friend or a guide.



Swordplay...

The fighting technique in King's Field II is slightly different from the original. The enemies have been enhanced to recognize your pattern of attack so that they can turn, block, even parry and thrust to put you quickly into the realm of the dead! What you will have to learn is to circle and then double back while the enemy is distracted. In this way, you will reduce your hits and live longer. As in the first quest, you can always go in for a quick hit, but in King's Field II, you will be less likely to achieve success — the Skeletons, for example, now have the ability to block with a shield, duck under a slash, and stab you while you try to retreat!

In addition, use your magic as a distraction while you go in for a hit. Once you learn some spells, stun the enemy first, then go in for the kill!

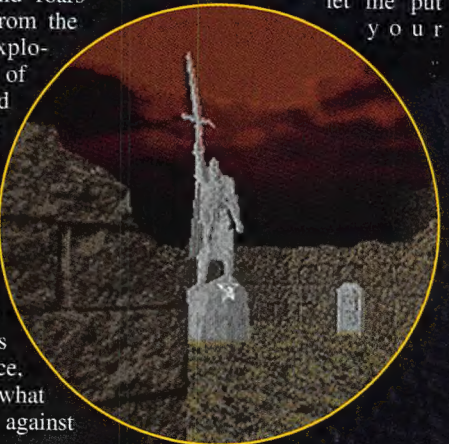
Enemies can use the same tactics though, so be careful. They also attack in groups, so make sure that you don't get surrounded! Good luck!

fying wails, screams, and roars from the afflicted and from the enemy; thunderous explosions, the glorious sound of steel on steel during sword fights; and, of course, the exceptional Stereo effects that were such a notable achievement in the first King's Field! You can actually tell how close you are to a monster by how loud the eerie screeches and roars are — with some practice, you can even distinguish what you're going to come up against

around the next bend!

With all of the improvements over the original King's Field, you may be worried that ASCII made changes in the intuitive control & easy-to-use pop-up menus. Well,

let me put
your



Behind The SCREAMS

It all started with a wish list. Design and Layout coordinator David "Commander" Silviera and Production overseer, Mark "The Monk" Johnson (doubling as ASCII's video game consultants and game masters) were given the opportunity to make a wish list for everything they wished had been in KF I and everything that could have been better that was already in the game. Combining feedback information from the consumers via the On-line News Groups, registration card information, and their own ideas, they put together a list of upgrades that would make the ultimate game. After presenting the list to From Software, Inc. of Japan, ASCII also added Austin (as in "Prince") Leininger to the ranks of the KF II team to help implement the upgrades and make KF II a smashing success.

"Rewriting the Japanese script was a blast," quoth Austin. "It was the opportunity to actually create an entire script for a video game only limited by the original story line from Japan."

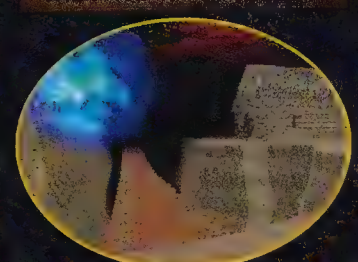
The improvements over King's Field I include...

- Larger world to explore.
- Outside areas of exploration.
- CD Quality music and sounds.
- Improved character definition and dialog.
- Enhanced storyline and plot.
- More fearsome enemies.
- Enhanced weapons and magics.

And Much, Much MORE!

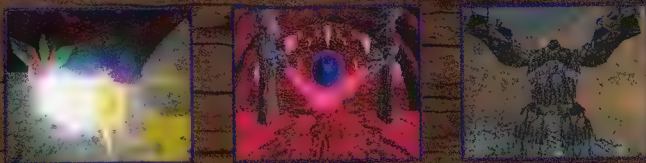


THE FACE OF THE ENEMY!



Behind The Screams...

While the first King's Field was a phenomenal success, ASCII wasn't satisfied with just putting out a sequel with the same great features that made KF I a hit. So they put their best American team on the project working directly with From Software, Inc. of Japan to make King's Field II the biggest, best, blow out game of the year!

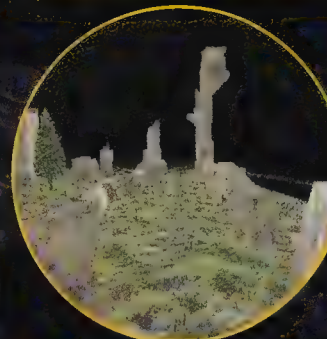
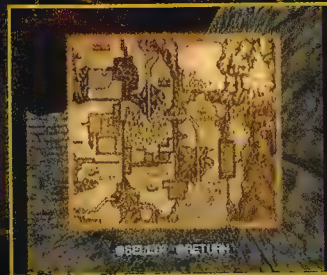


mind at ease. ASCII did leave in some of the already refined elements that made the first King's Field a roaring success. The intuitive control and pop-up menus remain unchanged for the most part. ASCII did, however, add a feature to the "System" menu which allows you to change the default button configuration to anything you want. This feature gives you just that much more control over how your game acts and reacts.

This much anticipated sequel to King's Field would have done incredibly well even without the

vast improvements. Just on the promise of the same quality in the beautiful 3D polygon graphics and intensity of gameplay, King's Field II would have been a sell out game! But with improved sound, graphics, and storyline, along with a humongous world to explore, King's Field II is destined to be one of the top sellers this holiday season and well into next year!

I would wish good luck to you, Prince Austin Lyle Forester...but you're gonna' need a lot more than luck to make it through this one!



Inside Edge

King's Field II is immense. Your only hope of exploring the whole thing is to acquire the Pixy Map early on in your quest. (It's an automap which maps everywhere you go in the game.) Each village, castle, dungeon, and underground has its own map, so figuring out where you've been is as easy as pulling up your items menu!

To find the Pixy Map, you must make your way through Varde's Forest (a maze just beyond the castle in the first town). Once you've made it through the maze, you'll receive this map along with another important item.

To receive the Pixy Map, you will have to talk to Varde, the character that holds it. It is important to speak with every character you come across every time you see them. Characters change what they say after you've visited other villages and villagers, so talk to them often! For reference, your character keeps a log of all conversations automatically.

TOP TEN MOST WANTED

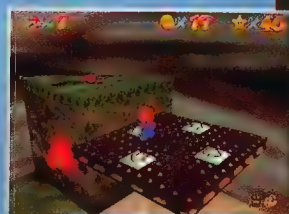
READERS' TOP TEN

1. Tekken 2 - PS
2. Resident Evil - PS
3. Mario⁶⁴ - Nintendo⁶⁴
4. Crash Bandicoot - PS
5. Mario RPG - SNES
6. NiGHTS - Saturn
7. Killer Instinct 2 - Arcade
8. Pilotwings - Nintendo⁶⁴
9. Donkey Kong Country 2 - SNES
10. Street Fighter Alpha - Saturn/PS



READERS' MOST WANTED

1. Mario⁶⁴ - Nintendo⁶⁴
2. Final Fantasy VII - PS
3. MK Trilogy - Nintendo⁶⁴
4. Virtua Fighter 3 - Arcade
5. KI Gold - Nintendo⁶⁴
6. Zelda⁶⁴ - Nintendo⁶⁴
7. Tomb Raider - PS/Saturn
8. Mario Kart R - Nintendo⁶⁴
9. Pilotwings 64 - Nintendo⁶⁴
10. Legacy of Kain - Nintendo⁶⁴



1. Tomb Raider - PS
2. Crash Bandicoot - PS
3. Amok - Saturn
4. WaveRace⁶⁴ - Nintendo⁶⁴
5. Suikoden - PS



6. Bug Too! - Saturn
7. Pandemonium - PS
8. Jet Moto - PS
9. Sonic Blast 3D - Saturn
10. Overkill - PS

1. NiGHTS - Saturn
2. Street Fighter Zero 2 - Saturn
3. Wave Race⁶⁴ - Nintendo⁶⁴
4. Incredible Toons - PS
5. Powerslave - Saturn



6. Mr. Bones - Saturn
7. Pandemonium - PS
8. Virtua Cop 2 - Saturn
9. Ghouls 'N Ghosts - Genesis
10. Super Mario Kart - SNES

1. Tomb Raider - PS
2. Suikoden - PS
3. Resident Evil - PS
4. Super Mario⁶⁴ - Nintendo⁶⁴
5. Lunar: Eternal Blue - Sega CD



6. Policenauts - PS
7. Final Fantasy 5 - SNES
8. Wipeout XL - PS
9. Crash Bandicoot - PS
10. Front Mission - SNES

1. Tomb Raider - PS
2. Sakura Taisen - Saturn
3. Suikoden - PS
4. Policenauts - Saturn
5. Persona - PS



6. Resident Evil - PS
7. Torico - Saturn
8. Psychic Force - PS
9. Contra - PS
10. Tenchi Sozo - SF

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Congratulations

to last month's winners:

First Prize:

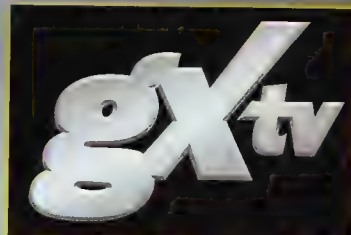
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Second Prize:

John Allen, Capitol Heights, MD

Third Prize:

Gabriel Laverdiere, Ste.Foy, QC



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Shooting things with gun and partner
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Chuck Brown: Deceased
Barry Polipoey: Deceased



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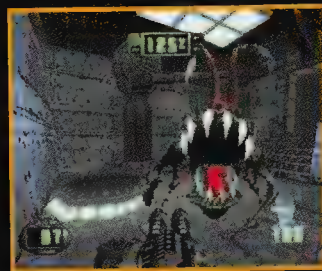


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And Kill Them.

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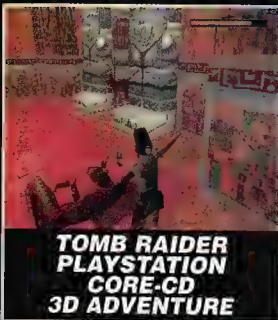


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VIEWPOINT

Legend
G Graphics
C Control
P Play mechanics
M Music
O Originality



All one need do is read my *TR* review to know how awestruck I am with Core's soon-to-be-legendary new game. Lara's character of the century, and this game is beyond any adventure you've ever experienced. The ambient music, vast levels, intelligent enemies, brilliant CG cinemas and movie-quality story only begin to tell the tale. Buy a PlayStation now if you haven't already. *Tomb Raider* will make your Christmas Merry!

G C P M O 100

There's just something about the way the elements of this game together: the incredible detail of the textures, the ultra-imaginative level design, and the heavily cinematic sensibilities it employs. They're each examples of perfection individually, but together they draw you in like no other game does. When you first dive underwater, you can actually feel the cool water against your skin, refreshing and unsettling ('cause you have no idea what else is down there, or how deep it goes...) at the same time. *Tomb Raider* is just an astonishing example of game craftsmanship, and easily one of the best games ever.

G C P M O 99

The most visually impressive game I've personally seen on the PlayStation. Right from the start this totally immerses you in a world of *Indiana Jones*-type exploration. This is the first game to allow total freedom of movement; no rails, no boundaries; just awesome cave structures and fantastic texture-mapped graphics. Add to this a total freedom of vision (just like *Super Mario 64*), the hottest new videogame character (complete with ice-melting Brit accent), astonishing cut-scenes and you're playing the best adventure title ever seen. Astonishing.

G C P M O 97



Konami crafted this epic RPG some time ago. I fought through the import as long as I could and then upon its announced US release waited anxiously for the US translation. I'm glad I did. Coupled with a great story *Suikoden's* battles are some of the best ever. The menus scream by and the music is not only fitting but superb. The overhead map leaves much to be desired, but otherwise one of the best RPGs in years.

G C P M O 90

Suikoden is one of the few fantasy RPGs that truly takes the genre in a whole new direction. There are some potholes along that road, like the equipping, unequipping problem and such, but the journey is well worth it. The storyline is great, the battle system is very well done, the characters are vivid and memorable, and the soundtrack is just stunning. Overhead graphics kind of bite, but otherwise, this is a truly spectacular experience.

G C P M O 95

I love traditional RPGs, and nothing hurts me more than my entire PlayStation RPG selection consisting of the very bad *Beyond the Beyond*. Thanks to Konami, that's all changing with the domestic release of *Suikoden*. Now this should have been the first PlayStation RPG released. It has an outstanding storyline, great battles, and amazing music, making *Suikoden* the best 32-bit RPG I've ever played. I can't thank you enough, Konami...

G C P M O 96



Appaloosa have created a fine (hard, really hard, but fine) 3D actioner in the *Contra* spirit. *Contra: Hard Corps* (my favorite in the series) it's not, but it comes as close as I think anyone could expect from a 3D game. The action is non-stop, the bosses, big and bad, and the music, very impressive. Having to beat the game on normal to see all six levels I do not agree with in this case. It's way too hard for the masses. Only the most die-hard *Contra* buffs will win this war. But it's a war worth winning.

G C P M O 80

Yes this looks and sounds amazing, but to me *Contra* has always been about precision play mechanics as much as impressive bosses. The problem is the control method. *Legacy of War* is a top/down scrolling shooter with a control system like *Smash TV* on the Genesis: namely a lock-direction fire button. That just doesn't work for me. It's still a good game, but with an *Overkill*-style control system this could have been awesome. Make the next one 2D, huh guys?

G C P M O 83

Ahh... *Contra* makes the world go 'round. The PS treats the series well, with great 3D levels, awesome polygonal bosses, and a redbook soundtrack packed with *Contra* goodness. The four characters are cool and each has their own personalized set of powerful weapons. The control is a little weird due to the way you must lock your firing direction on and off, but I'll deal with it. After-all, this is *Contra*—two player co-op, power-ups, long levels, and armies of little dudes to blow-up. Definitely a must-buy!

G C P M O 89



Platform addicts, prepare to be amazed. *Pandemonium*, with its live action camera, brings a new sense of 'being there' to the action platform genre which Sony is now in complete control of. The graphics will astound you, the bosses will scare you and the music will entice you. This game is quite the work of art. The CG intro is possibly the best ever. It's a little on the easy side but brilliant! Everyone will love *Pandemonium*.

G C P M O 90

Pandemonium is a platform fan's dream come true. Mixing classic 2D ledge-leaping action with some of the most vibrant and colorful visuals this side of *NIGHTS*, *Pandemonium* rises above its simplistic play mechanics to become a truly joyous experience! The game may be set on a 2D plane but thanks to the amazing interactive camera system it immerses you in a 3D environment. 2D control in a 3D world? Works for me!

G C P M O 92

Wow, this is impressive! As long as you remember that this is essentially a 2D platformer with impressive 3D accoutrements, you're onto a real winner here. The storyline is funny, well thought out and from the same folks who brought you *The Horde* (those sound effects and monsters are so similar!), and although starting off as a somewhat easy platform romp, by the fifth level you'll be tested to your very limits. Plus you've got a really cool intro (that jester's voice must be Greg Proops) and two great characters. Excellent platform frolics!

G C P M O 85



A beautifully texture mapped game, *Deception* mixes tried and true corridor gaming, demonic overtones and strategy as you set and spring traps throughout a shiveringly haunted mansion. There are plenty of scares in *Deception*. Although everything is executed extremely well right down to the creation mode, I can't say I like this game. I found the mouse trap aspect amusing but not engulging enough to hold my attention. Strategy fans will dig it.

G C P M O 75

An original PlayStation release! Yes indeed, I was as surprised as you are! This medieval adventure with dark overtones and a fantastic brooding atmosphere is genuinely inspired; and I thank Tecmo profusely for releasing it here. This is 3D polygon adventuring with a dollop of strategy and an all new attack for your hero: magical traps! As the story unfolds, you're treated to a vast array of murderous trapping devices to kill your polygon characters with until the Devil himself is summoned! Numerous endings, controllable monsters made from dead souls... yes, this my kind of game! Thoroughly recommended!

G C P M O 95

A novel twist on the *Doom* genre that features a more strategic approach to subduing the enemy. With a huge array of traps, magical weapons and monsters at hand this game never gets boring. The game setting is brought to life with excellent graphics and superb sound as you struggle with castle intruders who attempt to thwart your demonic plans. Highly original and highly recommended.

G C P M O 88

"...Time Commando could rewrite
the book on fighting games."

— happypuppy.com

"It's 2 a.m. and I'm still playing
Time Commando..."

— GameSpot



Prehistoric



Roman Times



Feudal Japan



Medieval



Conquistador



Modern Wars



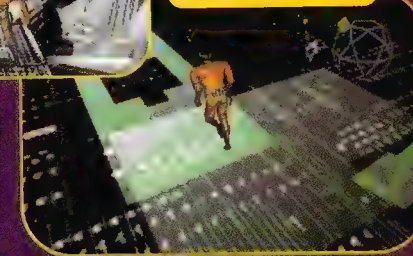
Western



The Future



The Virus



Nine Distinct Worlds

Battle through nine time eras:
Prehistoric, Roman Times,
Feudal Japan, Medieval,
Conquistador, Western,
Modern Wars, The Future
and the ultimate showdown
against The Virus itself.

45 Deadly Weapons

Master dozens of lethal weapons
— from Prehistoric clubs to Wild
West guns to futuristic lasers.

Over 80 Fierce Enemies

Defeat more than 80 real-time
polygonal 3-D enemies from past
and future battlefields.

Incredible Environments

Journey through stunning realms
as characters are seamlessly
integrated with gorgeous pre-
rendered backgrounds.

TIME COMMANDO

Check out the demo at <http://www.activision.com> or <http://www.mcafee.com/mforhome/> or
visit us on America Online at Keyword "Activision" or on CompuServe at Keyword "Go Activision."
Now available on PlayStation® Game Console and MS-DOS/Windows 95 CD-ROM.



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DISRUPTOR
PLAYSTATION
UNIVERSAL INT.-CD
ACTION

The FMV that opens *Disruptor* is an exercise in pain. It honestly destroyed my mood. Why on earth would I want to be this hyper-lame? HIT THE BUTTON! A look at the game itself unveils a meaty corridor shooter with smooth graphics diverse environments and high quality visuals. A corridor game alert should be sounded! After *Powerslave*, I'll be hard pressed to find as good a corridor experience but (minus the FMV) *Disruptor* will do just fine..

G C P M O 80
8 8 7 7 5

Another quality first person perspective shooter courtesy of Universal. Smooth graphics (though with limited visibility), great sounds, chunky weapons and even psionic powers to mess around with. Each level teaches you a new technique and sending enemies flying with the plasma shotgun can be VERY satisfying. Even though there's nothing new here, I can appreciate a good corridor game when I see one. One question though: where's the link-up mode?

G C P M O 85
8 8 8 7 5

This sure plays a mean game of *Doom*, and was suitably exciting and tough to hold my attention right until the final battle (with a surprisingly weak-looking boss). The extra touches (3D polygon environments with landscapes and psionics) add great depth, but the game falls on two counts; hideous, blighted FMV that should have been left on the cutting room floor, and annoying pauses when changing weapons. Overcome these two embarrassments, and you're playing mean corridor stompatron.

G C P M O 86
8 8 9 8 4



SOVIET STRIKE
PLAYSTATION
EA-CD
SHOOTING

Soviet Strike is the 32-bit sequel I've been waiting for. The tried and trusted mixture of strategy and action that typified the 16-bit *Strike* games returns, this time accompanied by professional FMV, 3D polygon objects and ultra-realistic CD sourced terrain. It's not perfect: The frame rate is way too choppy, and the difficulty level is a bit uneven (most enemies have a range bigger than the screen and rarely miss), but *Strike* fans are still gonna love this.

G C P M O 89
8 8 7 7 6

I was somewhat disappointed with this transformation from 16 to 32 bit as I found the actual missions far too difficult to complete (plus you have to begin your expedition from the very beginning should you die). This is probably just me being inept, but many gamers should be aware of the difficulty level before becoming transfixed by the stunning FMV sequences and involving plot. Still don't like the way those buildings explode into water-thin sections, though...

G C P M O 81
7 8 7 7 8

I'm a big fan of the 16-bit *Strike* series. The 32-bit update uses the same formula, but throws in real-time 3D battlefields and a cool FMV plot that gets deeper as you progress. The frame rate's a little low, the playfield looks a tad bland at times, but between the taxing demands of huge missions and the barrage of enemies, everything becomes a blur of blow-ups and bullets (fine by me!). A lot of quality play at your disposal here, and I recommend it to fans, purists, and newcomers alike.

G C P M O 80
7 8 9 6 9



PERFECT WEAPON
PLAYSTATION
ASC-CD
ADVENTURE/FIGHT

What a surprise from ASC! The first pre-rendered adventure (since *Resident Evil*) worth your time has arrived. *PW* features a slick lead character modeled and animated with extreme care and locales you won't soon forget. The fighting is complex, yet easy to execute, and the accompanying soundtrack and effects complement the action on screen. What's even better, though, is the massive size of this adventure. Said to be over 100 hours long, *PW* will satisfy even the most demanding adventure gamer.

G C P M O 80
9 7 8 8 9

Take the pre-rendered backdrops, and polygon characters of *Resident Evil*, add a *Tekken 2*-style combat system and hey presto: *Perfect Weapon*! The trouble is, these two game styles do not go well together, especially when the main character is as horribly unresponsive as Blake Hunter. The awkward camera angles sometimes make it hard to see the action when fighting, and even though you do kinda get used to it, the whole thing is just way too frustrating for me. Nice graphics, though.

G C P M O 79
8 4 7 7 9

Perfect Weapon is the best pre-rendered polygonal adventure I've ever played. I still love *Resident Evil*, but *PW* takes you to so many more places with so much more to see and do. The key here is that nothing ever loads, so every wicked piece of pre-rendered art hits you instantly. Throw in a heavily fighting-based gameplay engine with excellent control and truly massive levels and I'm lovin' this game. Check out my review for full details.

G C P M O 91
9 9 9 9 10



PUZZLE FIGHTER
PLAYSTATION
CAPCOM-CD
PUZZLE

If you're ever gonna play a puzzle game this should be the one. *Puzzle Fighter*, besides its ultra-hip, squished Capcom fighting crew adds a unique twist to this otherwise over-used concept. The addition of combos that can turn what looks like certain death into a furious victory makes every game a fight to the end and the music, re-mixed for your listening pleasure, is great. I like the shatter effect, too, when jewels explode.

G C P M O 80
8 8 7 9 5

I can admit that *Puzzle Fighter* isn't one of the best puzzle games that I've played; but let others say what they will, I really liked it. The puzzle engine isn't wildly original, but when added with the super-deformed Capcom characters and fighting game aspects, it's a wildly enjoyable experience.

G C P M O 93
9 8 7 9 9

It's nice that this game exudes *Street Fighter/Night Warriors* cuteness, but as a game, it's suspiciously similar to *Puyo Puyo*, *Baku Baku Animal*, and a countless ton of others. None of that's bad, as those are fun games I truly do enjoy, but if you've played any one of them, you've played this, too. I did like the *Street Fighter* mode, but otherwise, this offers nothing to the genre except for cute voices and reminiscent *Street Fighter* tunes.

G C P M O 80
6 6 7 7 2



NANOTEK WARRIOR
PLAYSTATION
VIRGIN-CD
SHOOTING

Tempest for the new age! A mixture of hot techno and twisting, turning ropes of enemy and obstacle-laden polygons, *Nanotek Warrior* is as much a ride as it is a game. The difficulty is way high and some may hurl at first, victim of *Nano*'s many twists and turns, but overall this game is a rush to play. I especially like the inner tube scenarios using reverse G's to dart through huge fan blades. *Tempest* fans will thoroughly dig *Nanotek*.

G C P M O 80
8 9 7 9 8

A 3D scrolling shooter set on a tube may not sound like the greatest game concept, but in practice it actually works pretty well. *Nanotek Warrior* is fast, furious, good looking (even if the objects are a little simple) and super tough - maybe even a bit too tough. *Tempest 2000* this ain't, but hardcore blasting fans looking for a shooter that'll last more than a day could do a lot worse.

G C P M O 81
8 9 7 8 8

Unlike *Starwinder*, this first person shooter has plenty goin' for it. Ten long levels of non-stop blasting, fantastic high-speed texture-mapped polygonal tube ridin', and hey, it plays like a dream. There's always a new swarm of enemies, insane moving obstacles to dodge, and freaky mid and end bosses that you fight in wicked 3D battle zones. Everyone says it's too tough... yeah, yeah, quit your whining, you girle men! It's good 'n tough, that's all. Finally, the fantastic techno score keeps me grinnin'.

G C P M O 90
9 9 9 9 9



WIPEOUT XL
PLAYSTATION
PSYGNOSIS-CD
RACING

I know this sounds crazy, but I liked original *Wipeout* better than this enhanced-in-the-wrong-places sequel. The hills and valleys found in the original have been sacrificed for vastness' sake and the music doesn't live up to the blazing original. What's worse is that the female characters are gone. *XL* does have new sleds, better effects, more tracks and better graphics, but it just doesn't capture the spirit of the original on the SS. I'm surely alone on this one.

G C P M O 88
10 9 7 8 8

The fastest graphics ever seen, a supremely polished racing engine, glorious texture-mapped scenery, no glitching or pop-up... what could possibly go wrong? Well, nothing if you didn't play the first *Wipeout*, but those with a modicum of racing should battle through this game in two days. The whole experience is undeniably awesome until the end, which is over way too soon. I would have given this 100%, except for the longevity; I want more than two days of play from my PlayStation software...

G C P M O 93
10 10 7 10 9

The game that sold a hundred thousand PlayStations is back, and how! New tracks, new weapons, improved CPU AI, the ability to completely destroy other craft (or you own), and an even more kickin' soundtrack (the *Prodigy* is close to my heart). It may be the same graphics engine but *Wipeout XL* looks faster, smoother, and fuller than its predecessor. The lightning paced gameplay and balanced craft handling is much the same, but hey, if it ain't broke, don't fix it! Another notch in Sony's belt.

G C P M O 94
10 9 8 10 6



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MACHINEHEAD
PLAYSTATION
EIDOS-CD
SHOOTING

Hmmm. A sexy babe ridin' a missile-like rocket cycle trying to stop a planet eating virus... OK. For shooting purists it doesn't get much better. Although I found the controls a bit (well, very) awkward the game itself is an interesting design. The mixture of search and destroy as you complete each mission is pretty cool and the light sourcing is turned on high. I so crave a camera behind the character though, and *MH* doesn't have one.

G C P M O 75
(7) (7) (7) (8) (7)



STREET RACER
PLAYSTATION
UBI SOFT-CD
RACING/BATTLE

Street Racer is the best attempt at mimicking *Mario Kart* yet. The high-res graphics complete with poodles of hot cameras are a real show-stopper and the character design is unique and original. My E. Honda dude will wreak havoc on all comers! Although the tracks are pretty short they are extremely well laid and laced with peril. The music's very cool and the cartoon tracks awarded for completing the gold cup... crazy!

G C P M O 78
(8) (7) (8) (8) (5)



STARWINDER
PLAYSTATION
MINDSCAPE-CD
RACING/SHOOTING

So you're racing along a tube, or on this thin track in the middle of empty space, just flying straight and shooting things, where everything looks the same and you barely even notice your opponents, and they expect you to get swept away by their elaborate little storyline in which you're Conner Rhodes, pride of your species, with a racing strategy so unique and astonishing that it's just the talk of the galaxy? Right... My strategy is to fly straight and shoot, and it hasn't failed me yet. This game is just pointless, cheap, and sad.

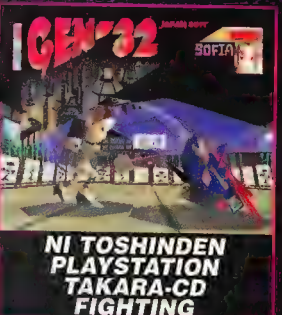
G C P M O 44
(7) (5) (3) (2) (3)



TOMB RAIDER
SATURN
CORE-CD
3D ADVENTURE

This is such a hard review for me. After playing the PS version of *Tomb Raider* I can't even look at the Saturn game. There, I said it. While I love it immensely, I cannot score it anywhere near the PS game. It may be one of the best Saturn games this year and is definitely the console's best adventure but the texture, frame rate and light sourcing loss weighs heavy on Lara's shoulders. Buy a PS or buy the Saturn game. Either way you can't go wrong. Core has struck gold!

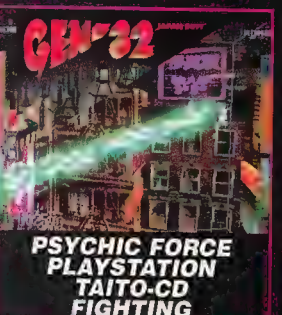
G C P M O 90
(8) (9) (10) (10) (10)



NI TOSHINDEN
PLAYSTATION
TAKARA-CD
FIGHTING

Again, my review says it all yet here I am forced to say even more. *Ni Toshinden*, a combination of *Toshinden* and characters from Takara's hot toy line is a super-deformed fan's dream fighter. With its simplistic yet effective controls, hot music and blazing graphics, soaked with color and light, *Ni Toshinden* is a cut above *VF Kids*. Will it ever come out here, though? I doubt it. If there ever was a niche game, this is it.

G C P M O 80
(9) (8) (7) (8) (7)



PSYCHIC FORCE
PLAYSTATION
TAITO-CD
FIGHTING

And now for something completely different... *Psychic Force* opens with animation beyond 90% of the anime out there and from there pours out a fighter with Ziplock freshness, hot character design, and excellent control. A lack of any real depth makes it a fleeting experience but overall this is a worthy fighter, especially versus a friend. Honestly, I'd buy it for the music alone. Zuntata is in rare form here.

G C P M O 85
(8) (9) (7) (10) (9)

Joining the army of corridor-type 3D shooters on the PS is a tough job. You gotta have great texture-mapped polygon graphics, a smooth frame rate, light-sourcing, good control, and hard-core levels and enemies. Enter *Machine Head*. As well as completely fulfilling these basic requirements, *Machine Head* has a cool sci-fi plot, impressive level construction, and really solid mech play mechanics. While it's not exactly stunning in any one area, this is a long, enjoyable shooter.

G C P M O 82
(8) (8) (8) (9) (7)

Fact no.1: *Super Mario Kart* is still the greatest kart racing game ever devised. Fact no.2: *Super Mario Kart* will never appear on a non-Nintendo format. Fact no.3: *Street Racer* is the closest thing to *Mario Kart* that PlayStation owners are ever going to get. *Street Racer* has crisp graphics, a truckload of extra features, up to 8-player split-screen action (or 4 in boxes), and so-so control. It's a good game, it's just not *Mario Kart*.

G C P M O 83
(8) (7) (7) (6) (2)

Starwinder looks like it could be a bonus level in some other really cool shooter. Unfortunately, it's not. Fly down a tunnel, shoot stuff, beat your opponent to the other end and er, that's it. Sure, a simple concept doesn't necessarily make for a bad game, but it does here. *Starwinder* gets real dull real quick. The action is supremely repetitive and there's not nearly enough variety in the tracks. The graphics are smooth, and I did kind of dig the cheesy FMV cut scenes, but that's not really enough to recommend a purchase.

G C P M O 52
(8) (7) (4) (3) (2)

Ugh, what happened here? This version seems to be running at half the resolution of its PlayStation cousin, and has this awful straight-from-Genesis color palette. I mean, it's still a great game, and if you only have Saturn and have no plans to buy a PlayStation, you'll be more than happy with it. Really, though, I'm probably the biggest Saturn fan there is here at GameFan, and I've got to admit that the difference between this and the PS one is like night and day. Very disappointing.

G C P M O 91
(7) (8) (10) (9) (10)

Besides a few characters and moves, *Ni Toshinden* is nothing like the previous *Toshindens*. In other words, it's good. *Ni Toshinden* is also not your typical fighter. Moves that require motions are gone, replaced by single button specials. The characters are also all super-deformed and stretchy, adding a bit of humor. This isn't a serious fighter, but if you're searching for something that's a bit more fun and lighthearted than the norm, look no further.

G C P M O 80
(6) (7) (7) (7) (7)

In a world full of traditional 2D and 3D fighters, it's nice to see something different come along. *Psychic Force* is still a 2D fighter in essence, but there's such a feeling of freedom and the gameplay's so unique, it gave me much enjoyment. The graphics are hot and the music's great; my only complaint is with the lack of depth (you can beat the game with the same basic strategy). I just hope it makes it out here...

G C P M O 87
(7) (8) (7) (8) (9)

Post-apocalyptic first person shooters are a dime a dozen, but how about one set on a hover bike? Control of the *Vorpal Blade* takes a bit of getting used to, but with practice becomes very intuitive. Plus EVERYTHING is made of light sourced polygons. The enemies look cool, the weapons are satisfying and the levels are varied. The only downside is the limited visibility distance which makes the game seem very dark, but even that rain can't stop the parade.

G C P M O 91
(8) (9) (8) (9) (7)

Round and round we go playing Ubi Soft's ultra hi-res racer, *Street Racer*. This slick game of short track mayhem is a joy to play with more cameras than I've ever seen along with hot sounds and music, and enough depth for the most demanding kart racer. The accompanying cartoon that plays between each round is beyond Saturday morning quality and the whole affair seems slick and well produced. Plus, up to 8 can play!

G C P M O 85
(9) (8) (8) (8) (7)

The numerous high-quality FMV sequences set up for an epic story; once I got to the game itself, however, I was sorely let down. What tries to be a racing game ends up more like a shooter, and it's enough trouble keeping yourself close to the track. What graphics are present are nice, but there's never that much to look at beyond the track itself. More time should have been spent on the game itself, and less on the cinematics.

G C P M O 62
(7) (6) (6) (8) (6)

It's a pity that the system for which *Tomb Raider* was originally intended has ended up with an inferior version of the game. It's still a solid title, but the glitchy visuals detract from the overall atmosphere. Still, the brilliant level design, cunning puzzles, ferocious monsters and awe-inspiring scenery are all as amazing as ever. My only other criticism would be that the control is just a little too much like *Prince of Persia* in 3D for my liking but you do get used to it.

G C P M O 90
(8) (7) (8) (8) (10)

On the one hand, I'm very impressed with this game. Unlike the cheap route Sega take with *VF Kids*, this is a totally original game with new characters, new moves, plenty of new systems, and cool new backgrounds. It's a lot of fun to screw around with, and looks surprisingly great in motion. On the other hand, it's *Toshinden*, so who cares? This is a good idea that should have been saved for a more worthy series.

G C P M O 78
(8) (6) (6) (5) (6)

Hey, this is pretty cool. The backgrounds are great, the intro is spectacular, and the music's good too... As for the game itself, I'm kind of ambivalent. On the plus side, it's totally original, and there's an incredible amount of strategy involved. The characters are vastly different and a lot of fun to experiment with. On the down side, it just gets kind of tiresome chucking fireballs all day. Maybe if the play mechanics were a bit more intuitive... Still well worth a purchase, and Acclaim would be wise to buy this one.

G C P M O 86
(9) (7) (8) (8) (9)

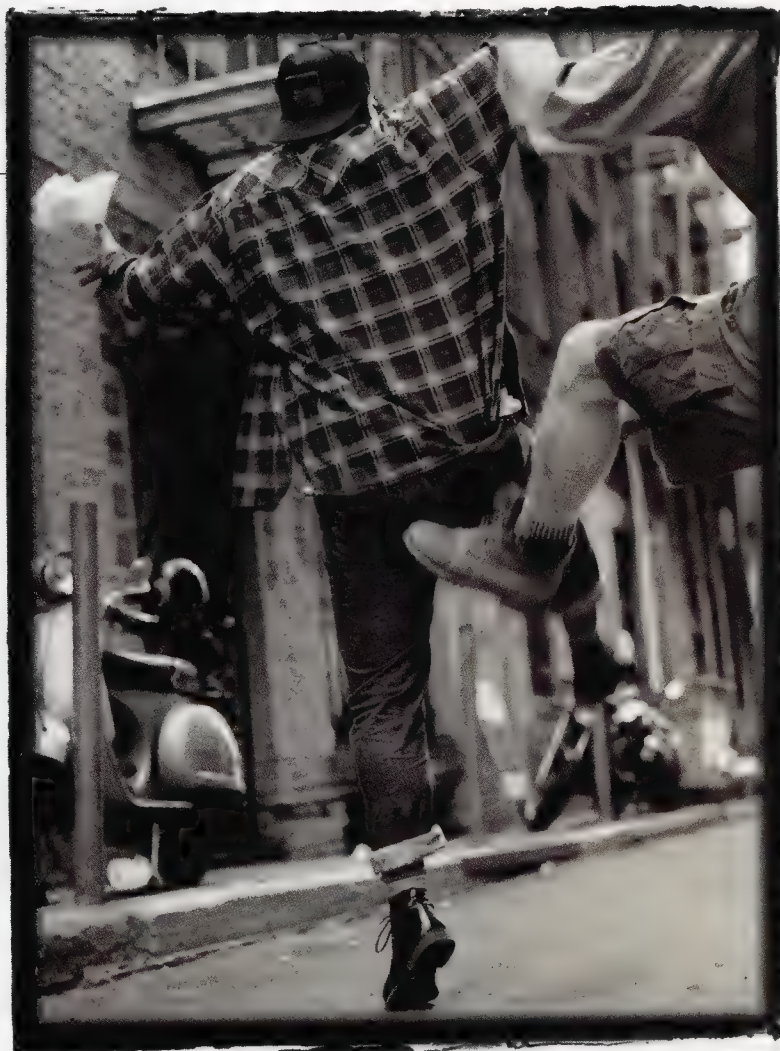
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want 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. No more embarrassment. No more insults. Just you, pummeling your opponents and laughing while you do it. Don't waste another minute. Change your life today.



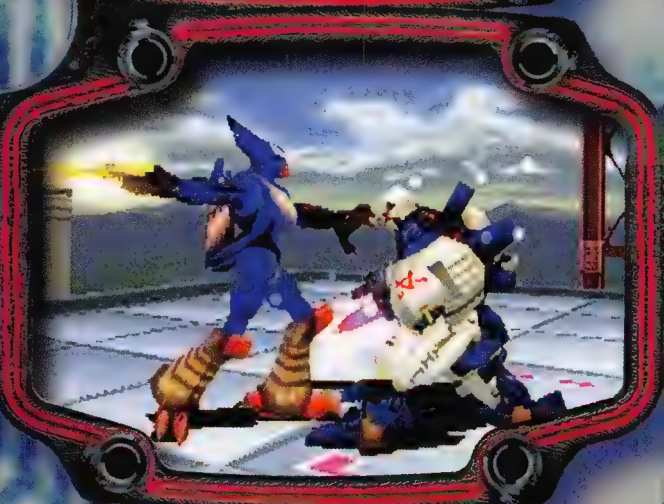
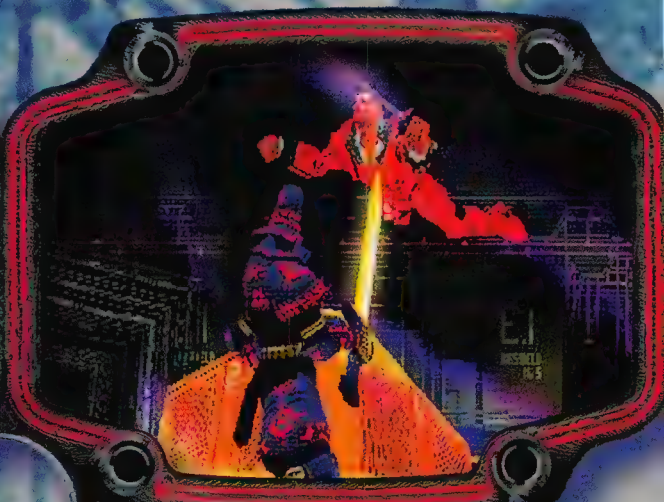
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SLICING THROUGH THE THIRD DIMENSION TO THE FINAL GALACTIC SHOWDOWN.

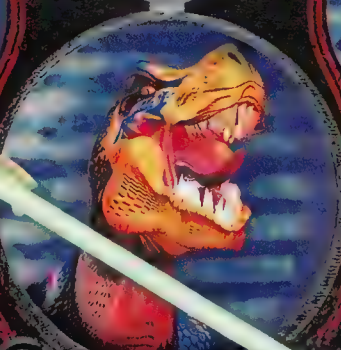
It's 2348 and ten of the mightiest galactic warriors are fighting for control of the Earth's fate. Using Plasma power—energy drawn from the user's own mental strength—the good, the bad, and the freaking ugly are each packing hundreds of weapon attacks, countless combos, and the ultimate battle barrage, Plasma Finals. Pick from any of the 4 different game modes of this hyper-realistic 3D fighter and you'll discover the level of precise control only CAPCOM can deliver.

All against intense backgrounds like Neo Tokyo, Federation Spaceport, and Planet Zeta; the perfect arenas to master the fine art of mercy killing.



FOURTH EMPIRE

STAR GLADIATOR



**STAR
GLADIATOR**
EPISODE: I
FINAL CRUSADE



CAPCOM
WWW.CAPCOM.COM

BIG MONEY, BIG PRIZES!... YOU'LL LOVE IT!
SEND IN THOSE CODES AND MAYBE YOU'LL BE THE NEXT WINNER!



*Travel With Thy Controller In
 Hand To A Land Where
 Cheaters Prosper...*



GXTV is the world's first video game TV with hyper-amplified sound and graphics. Enhance the thrill of gaming with adjustable speaker doors, stereo surround sound and a 15 watt sub woofer. Plus, the intense screen graphics will make you feel like your head's right inside the game. GXTV is also a 181-channel, 13" stereo TV with two A/V inputs, stereo headphone jack, backlit remote control and tilt/swivel stand. So whatcha waitin' for? Send in those codes and maybe you can win one of these GXTVs for yourself!



Send in your codes... good, bad, or ugly. We'll look 'em over and choose one grand prize winner each month. Codes cannot come from a previously published US magazine. Winners will be drawn each month and displayed here in Hocus Pocus, the only place where cheaters prosper. (Current subscribers who win a subscription will receive a one-year extension.)

SEND YOUR CARDS AND LETTERS TO:
Hocus Pocus
 5137 Clareton Dr., Suite 210
 Agoura Hills, CA 91301

First Prize!
**Sega Nomad
 System!!**

Second Prize!
**Nintendo
 GameBoy
 System!!**

Third Prize!
**Free 1 year
 GameFan
 Subscription!!**

**CONGRATULATIONS TO
 THIS MONTH'S WINNERS!!**

GRAND PRIZE WINNER:

PETER STAACK, HIGHLAND PARK, ILLINOIS

FIRST PRIZE WINNER:

DON LEWIS, FORTUNA, CALIFORNIA

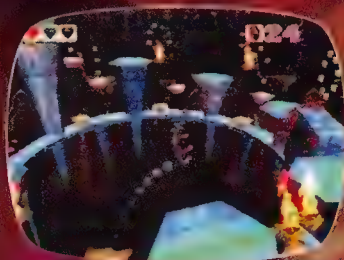
SECOND PRIZE WINNER:

DAVID RODRIGUEZ, SAN JOSE, CALIFORNIA

THIRD PRIZE WINNER:

ZAK AFIFI, CLEMMONS, NORTH CAROLINA

Just cause he's a joker doesn't
mean he plays with a full deck.

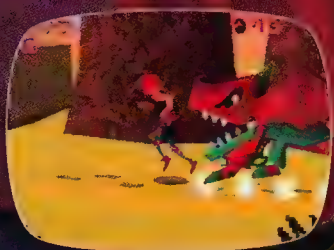


Ante up to Crystal Dynamics' fastest,
endorphin-based 3D action game.

Your team of fellow speed-mongers includes

Nikki, Farnis and Sid – an acrobatic wizard,

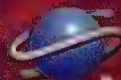
a slightly twisted jester and his maniacal puppet on a stick. Blur through unbelievably
spacious levels of their deranged 3D kingdom while shape-changing into a fire-blasting dragon
or raging rhino. Just sit down and get taken for a ride. It's pure rocket fuel.



PANDEMONIUM!

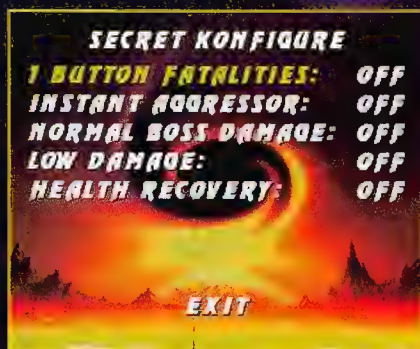


Check out our new website at <http://www.crystalld.com>



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Soon Available on PC CD-Rom



Access the "?" in the OPTION SCREEN. HOLD UP, L1, L2, R1, R2 until the screen shakes and you hear a sound. This code will allow you to have a number of options, one of them being one button FATALITIES! Here are the Buttons:

HP: Brutality
HK: Fatality #1
LK: Fatality #2
BLOCK: Friendship
RUN: Animality



To choose the **KOMBAT ZONE**, highlight SONYA or HUMAN SMOKE and Push UP & START. You should then hear a sound. After choosing your fighter, it will then ask you what stage you wish to do Kombat on.

To play as a **CLASSIC CHARACTER**, highlight RAYDEN, KANO, KUNG LAO or JAX and press the SELECT Button. The square will rotate to reveal the classic character!



To play as **CHAMELEON**, select any ninja (Scorpion, Reptile, Rain, etc.), and hold LEFT, HP, HK, BLOCK and RUN until the match starts and you change. For the 2nd player, hold RIGHT, HP, HK, BLOCK, and RUN.

Darrin Griffin

nny@mail.wwineternet.net

TIME COMMANDO

SONY PLAYSTATION

PASSWORDS

Here are some passwords for Activision's Time Commando. Each will put you in the first level of a different time-period / stage. The maximum # of men is 3 & energy is 4. (Note: These passwords are for **NORMAL LEVEL**!)

Roman - XCBVVEFM					
LEVEL	MEN	ENERGY BLOCKS	ENERGY FULL	VIRUS	EXTRA CHIPS
2-1	2	1	1	0	4

Japanese - CMUBLBGO					
LEVEL	MEN	ENERGY BLOCKS	ENERGY FULL	VIRUS	EXTRA CHIPS
3-1	3	3	2.57	0	1

Medieval - OWDIBBGQ					
LEVEL	MEN	ENERGY BLOCKS	ENERGY FULL	VIRUS	EXTRA CHIPS
4-1	3	3	1.25	0	1

Conquistador - KWIYDFDM					
LEVEL	MEN	ENERGY BLOCKS	ENERGY FULL	VIRUS	EXTRA CHIPS
5-1	2	4	4	0	7

Wild West - UXRJEVNO					
LEVEL	MEN	ENERGY BLOCKS	ENERGY FULL	VIRUS	EXTRA CHIPS
6-1	3	4	4	0	7

Modern Wars - UZXNOYMO					
LEVEL	MEN	ENERGY BLOCKS	ENERGY FULL	VIRUS	EXTRA CHIPS
7-1	3	4	1.75	0	0

Future - QPKZJFLA					
LEVEL	MEN	ENERGY BLOCKS	ENERGY FULL	VIRUS	EXTRA CHIPS
8-1	3	4	2	0	10

Virus - Final Stage - SERDLPIL					
LEVEL	MEN	ENERGY BLOCKS	ENERGY FULL	VIRUS	EXTRA CHIPS
9-1	3	4	3.25	0	

John Allen

Capitol Heights, Maryland

I WOULD BE
HONORED
TO BREAK
YOUR
FACE

Hope you aren't too attached to your nose. Play Street Fighter Alpha 2 for your Super NES® and you have a good chance of having it rearranged. Ryu, Ken and Chun-Li are back along with over a dozen more characters, all spoiling for a fight. Custom Combos, new Super Moves and Alpha Counters give you a fighting chance. Almost. You can bet some-
things going to get broken first.

TEEN
T
AGES 13+



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SUPER NINTENDO
ENTERTAINMENT SYSTEM



Hey, they do look quite familiar... Just PAUSE the game and enter any one of the following to really gun 'em down!! Happy huntin'!

MAP ENEMY POSITIONS:

TRI, TRI, L2, R2, L2, R2, R1, CIR

MAP ENTIRE LEVEL:

TRI, TRI, L2, R2, L2, R2, R1, SQU

GOD MODE:

DOWN, L2, SQU, R1, RIGHT, L1, LEFT, CIR

DON LEWIS
FORTUNA, CALIFORNIA

FREE AMMO AND KEYS:

X, TRI, L1, UP, DOWN, R2, LEFT, LEFT

X-RAY VISION:

L1, R2, L2, R1, RIGHT, TRI, X, RIGHT

WARP LEVELS:

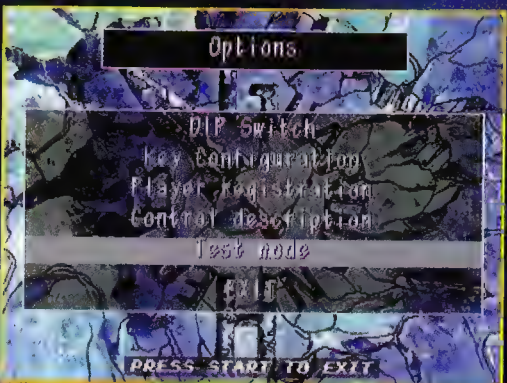
RIGHT, LEFT, R2, R1, TRI, L1, CIR, X



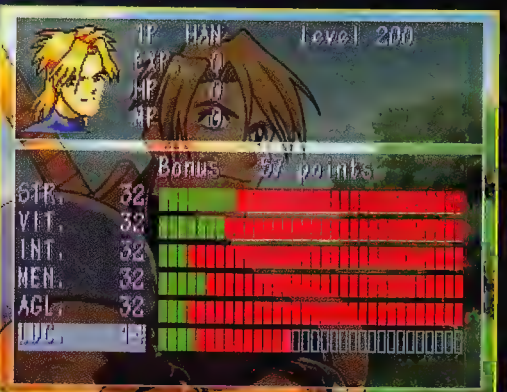
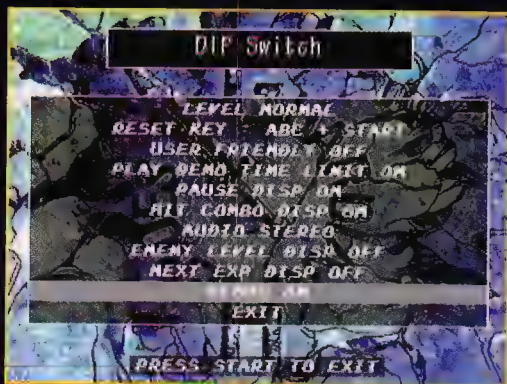
Thanks go to the hardcore David Rodriguez for the 100% all levels and all keys code. Another trick to note is for any 'bridge' level (such as Road to Nowhere): Instead of jumping to your doom, try jumping onto the ropes holding the bridge up (to the left or the right) and you've found an awesome short-cut. Just walk on these ropes and you'll complete the level in no time (just watch your step, you could still fall).



DAVID RODRIGUEZ
SAN JOSE, CALIFORNIA



Want to squeeze the last ounce of game-play from this awesome side-scrolling Treasure classic? Then enter the OPTION MODE from the title screen. Highlight EXIT and hold the X+B+Z buttons. Then press and hold DOWN on the D-pad (you'll get a 'roulette shuffle' effect), before quickly tapping A when the DIP-SWITCH option is highlighted (fast reactions are needed here!). Once you've succeeded, another option (DEBUG OFF/ON) should appear at the bottom of the screen. Switch the DEBUG to ON and execute the following:



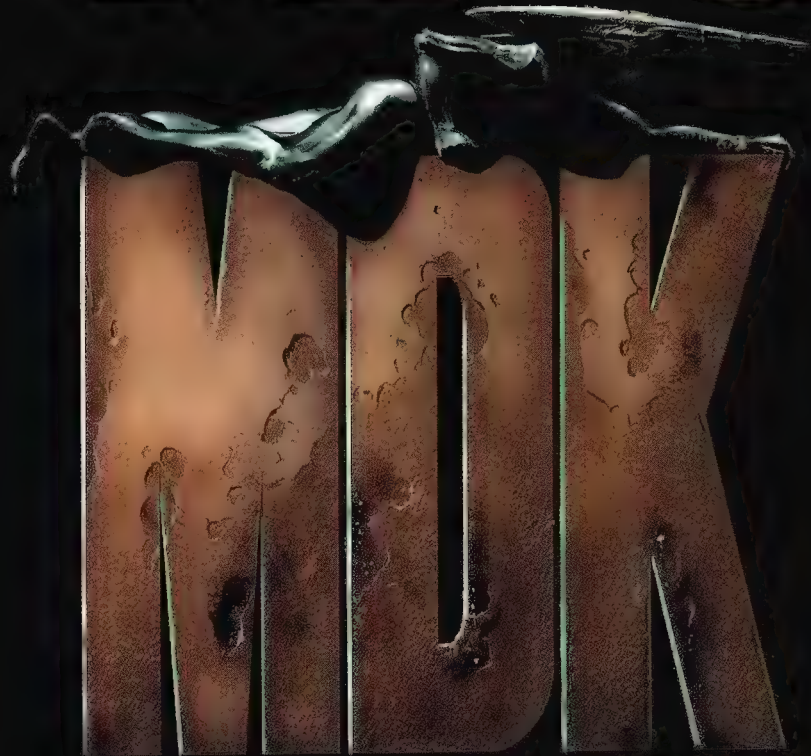
- 1.) Pick your character and a STAGE SELECT prompt appears.
- 2.) You'll also have 200 points to max out your character!
- 3.) Pause and press L SHIFT to activate collision detection (works in versus mode).
- 4.) In VERSUS mode, you have 45 different characters to choose from!
- 5.) In OPTIONS screen, access TEST MODE to see the seven different endings!

PETER STAACK
HIGHLAND PARK, ILLINOIS

When playing the game, enter one of the following:

- HOLD X+Y+Z+UP TO REFILL HEALTH
- HOLD X+Y+Z+DOWN TO DIE (!)
- HOLD R SHIFT+START TO SKIP AHEAD ONE STAGE
- HOLD R SHIFT+A+START TO SKIP TWO STAGES
- HOLD R SHIFT+B+START TO SKIP THREE STAGES
- HOLD L SHIFT+R SHIFT+START TO SKIP BACK ONE STAGE
- HOLD L+R+A+START TO SKIP BACK TWO STAGES
- HOLD L+R+B TO SKIP BACK THREE STAGES
- HOLD L+R+C TO SKIP BACK FOUR STAGES

IT THINKS.



THEREFORE IT KILLS.

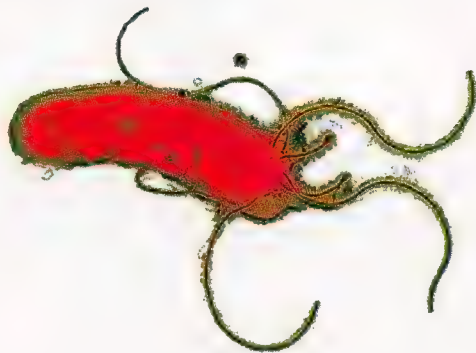


<http://www.playmatestoy.com>

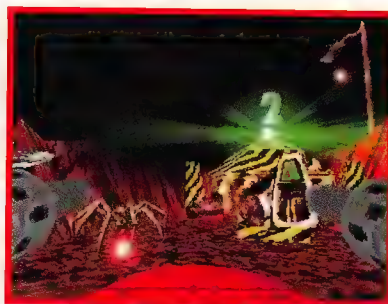


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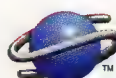


SAVE THE PLANET FROM A DEADLY VIRUS WITH




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INTERACTIVE

CORE
DESIGN INC.





OUT LEAVING THE COMFORT OF YOUR BOMB.



Hold on tight, this ain't no joyride. It's up to you to wipe the life-mutating Machine Head virus off the face of this zombie-infested planet. Equipped with a bombful of futuristic weapons, you have exactly fifteen missions to annihilate each and every one of the putrefied mutants. And then face the viral villain himself in the mother of all showdowns. So don't just sit there. Your bomb is waiting.

**MACHINE
HEAD**™

KING OF FIGHTERS '95

SONY-PLAYSTATION (IMPORT)

PLAY AS THE BOSSES!



At the screen where you choose your fighters, select TEAM EDIT, and select "YES." Then while holding START, input the following to play as the bosses Omega Rugal and Saishu Kusanagi!

UP & CIRCLE, RIGHT & SQUARE, LEFT & X, DOWN & TRIANGLE. (Press the direction pad and the coinciding button at the same time.)



ZAK AFI

CLEMMONS, NORTH CAROLINA

KING OF FIGHTERS '95

SONY-PLAYSTATION (IMPORT)

SAME CHARACTER FOR TEAM EDIT MODE, EXTRA-OPTIONS



When selecting your character, highlight "YES" in the TEAM EDIT option. Then while holding down the START button, input the following code:

UP & CIRCLE, DOWN & TRIANGLE, LEFT & X, RIGHT & SQUARE, UP & CIRCLE. (Done similar to the BOSS CODE.)



For an extra set of options, simply hold down all of the shoulder buttons (L1, L2, R1, R2) down at the same time and select CONFIGURATION with any button.

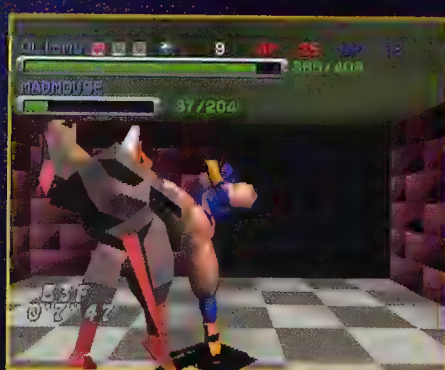
TOTAL NO. 1

SONY-PLAYSTATION (IMPORT)

SECOND OUTFIT, HOM'S SUICIDE, BOSS CHARACTERS!



We really don't know what significance this move has, but if you want Hom to commit suicide, simply press L1, R1, and DOWN at the same time.



To acquire the three bosses in Total No. 1, you must complete all three levels in QUEST MODE. To do this takes extreme fighting skill, and patience. And if you do accomplish this, you truly are No. 1!



ADAM HAZARD
PASO ROBLES,
CALIFORNIA

To play as the second player outfits, simply hold UP on the directional pad when selecting your character.



To pick the bosses, move the icon to the left of CHUJI, and you will see the boss names appear. Yep, MUFU, UDAN, and a slightly smaller NORK (which has changed to SNORK), will be playable!

SURVIVAL IS SIMPLE, NEVER STOP RUNNING.

"While graphics powerhouses come and go,
it's titles like Grid Runner that focus
on gameplay that have the potential to deliver
long-term play to fans."

"It's unique, challenging, and
packed with addictive gameplay..."

-GAMEFAN

- Next Generation

GRID RUNNER™

- ▶ Over 57 rounds of gameplay
- ▶ 15 monster opponents
- ▶ Two-player head-to-head action
- ▶ 28 independent two-player rounds
- ▶ Ability to perform different magical spells



ALSO
AVAILABLE FOR
WINDOWS™



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WWW.VIE.COM





Prepare to fly.

NIGHTS IS HERE.

NEVER, EVER, EVER, HAVE YOU EXPERIENCED ANYTHING LIKE THIS. NEVER, EVER, EVER, HAVE YOU BEEN ABLE TO FLY, FLUID AND FREE, IN REAL-TIME 3D. NOT UNTIL NIGHTS.™ THE FIRST TRUE SHOWCASE OF SEGA SATURN'S STUNNING CAPABILITIES. THE TECHNOLOGICAL TOUR DE FORCE THAT HAS EVERYONE IN THE GAMING WORLD ABSOLUTELY SPUN.

THE STORY

ONE OF THE MOST IMMERSIVE, MYSTICAL GAMING EXPERIENCES EVER, NIGHTS ESTABLISHES AN ENTIRELY NEW GAMEPLAY PARADIGM. THINK OF IT AS PSYCHODRAMA, AN EXPRESS ESCALATOR INTO THE SCHIZOPHRENIC, MIND-BENDING VIRTUAL WORLD OF YOUR DREAMS.

THE WORLD

CREATED BY THE RENOWNED SONIC TEAM, NIGHTS IS A FULL-ON 3D MASTERPIECE. A WORLD WITH LUSH DREAMSCAPE REALITIES, ITS OWN MICRO-CLIMATES, EVEN ITS OWN NATURAL ORDER, IMAGINE. SMOKE, FOG, CLOUDS, RAIN, AND WATER THAT APPEAR IN MULTIPLE LEVELS OF TRANSPARENCY. WATERFALLS, CURRENTS, WIND, AND, YES, A TORNADO THAT FOLLOW THE LAWS OF FLUID PHYSICS. ALL BACKED BY A RAGING SOUNDTRACK THAT BLENDS JAZZ, ROCK, ORCHESTRA, WORLD MUSIC, AND EFFECTS.

THE GAMEPLAY

NIGHTS SCREAMS ALONG AT BANSHEE ITS ADAPTIVE SPEED MANAGEMENT GAMEPLAY AND BREAKTHROUGH TO REPLICATE THE TRUE SENSATIONS MORPH SEQUENCES. ITS OVER TWENTY IN REAL TIME, AND ITS OMNIPRESENT



SPEED. DESPITE MASSIVE 3D DEMANDS, SYSTEM SUPPORTS BOTH BREAKNECK ENVIRONMENTS. WITNESS ITS ABILITY OF FLIGHT. ITS LIGHTNING MULTIPLE TRACKING CAMERA ANGLES THAT SCROLL-SHIFT SYMPHONY OF 3D POSITIONAL SOUND.

THE NEW 3D CONTROL PAD

ENGINEERED SPECIFICALLY TO INTENSIFY THE NIGHTS EXPERIENCE, SEGA SATURN'S 3D CONTROL PAD ESTABLISHES A NEW BENCHMARK IN SMOOTH AND DYNAMIC OPERATION. IN ANALOG MODE, ITS PULSE-SENSITIVE THUMBPAD ENABLES UNPRECEDENTED MANEUVERABILITY AT BREATHTAKING SPEEDS. AND A DIGITAL MODE ALLOWS COMPATIBILITY WITH ALMOST ALL OTHER SEGA SATURN GAMES.

{PLEASE CALL 1-800-USA-SEGA FOR ANY COMPATIBILITY QUESTIONS.}

The Benediction

There's more, of course. But the rest is up to you. Kick off your walking shoes. Say your prayers. And fly. No way you'll sleep. But you'll have wicked good dreams.

NIGHTS
into dreams...

ONLY ON



SEGA SATURN™

WWW.SEGA.COM



IMPACT RACING

SONY PLAYSTATION

HIGH-POWERED PASSWORDS



John Reynolds has completed *Impact Racing*, and has come up with some awesome codes for all of you to use! Simply input the codes in the PASSWORD option screen.

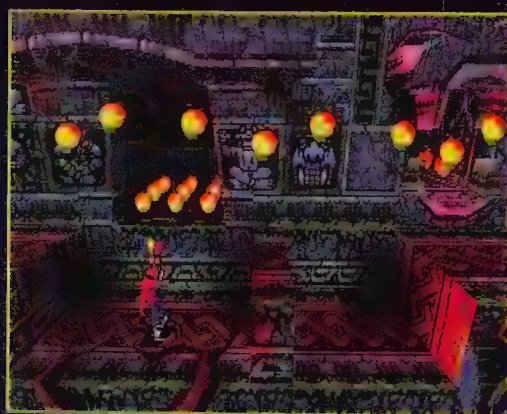
JOHN A. REYNOLDS
DOYLESTOWN, PENNSYLVANIA

I.AM.IMORTAL - INVINCIBILITY
LOADSOFTUFF - INFINITE WEAPONS
ALL.TOOLEDUP - ACCESS TO ALL WEAPONS
BONUS.LEVELS - PLAY ALL 6 BONUS TRACKS
ENDGAMELEVEL - PLAY FINAL TRACK OF GAME
RABBITBADGER - LEVEL SKIP
JOURNEYS.END - TRIPPY MUSIC MODE

**CRASH BANDICOOT**

SONY PLAYSTATION

FRUIT MADNESS



In the stages "Lost City" or "Sunset Vista," there is an infinite fruit trick that allows you to rack up on the extra lives! Just hit the first ceiling bat and proceed to the next. When the string of bats come flying down, jump up and kill the second ceiling bat. The whole row of bats should turn into the lovely fruit that our favorite bandicoot loves to eat! Is that good enough for you, George?

GEORGE GARDENIER
VIENNA, VIRGINIA

**BLACK DAWN**

SONY PLAYSTATION

CHEAT CODES!



PAUSE the game and enter the prefix: **SELECT, L2, SELECT, R2.**

NOTE: ALWAYS ENTER THE PREFIX BEFORE ENTERING THE REST OF THE CODE!

"MAX FUEL & AMMO" - TRI, TRI, TRI, CIR

"GET MAX WEAPONS" - L1, L2, R1, R2

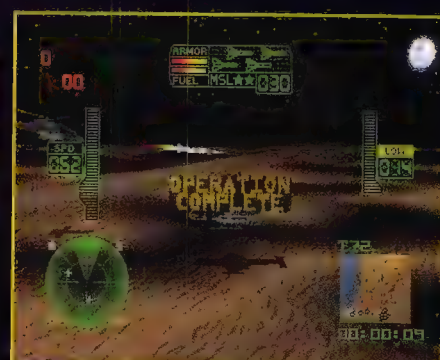
"CYCLE GUN MODES" - SELECT, SELECT, SELECT

"SUMMON WINGMAN" - SQU, SQU, SQU, CIR

"SCREEN MODE TOGGLE (BYPASS PAUSE MENU)" - DOWN R1, R2

"MISSION COMPLETE" - TRI, TRI, TRI, DOWN, DOWN, DOWN

"UPGRADE CURRENT WEAPON" - L1, L1, R1, R1



See you next month!

- WAKA & CHIEF HAMBLETON

Flex Some 16-Bit Muscle



More Challenges!
Face a life and death hunt to locate six Infinity Gems before Thanos. The fate of the world depends on you.



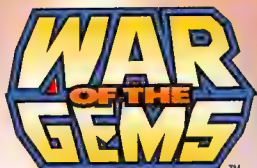
More Heroes!
Master the brute strength of your favorite Super Hero - Spider-Man, Wolverine, Iron Man, Captain America, and the Incredible Hulk.



More Super-Villains!
Battle fiendish hordes assembled by Thanos, including Blackheart, Dr. Doom and the diabolical evil clones of The Thing, Silver Surfer, Vision and a dozen others.



MARVEL SUPER HEROES™ IN



FLEX MORE 16-BIT MUSCLE!

The most powerful collection of Marvel Super Heroes unite to battle a multitude of treacherous villains on your Super NES! It's an incredible action-adventure demanding your skill, cunning and might to defeat the forces of evil and Thanos' quest for power.



MAKE HASTE.

Blue is back.



SONIC
3D BLAST

BLUE IS BACK. SONIC'S NEW WORLD IS IN 3D. WHICH MEANS THE LITTLE BLUE GUY HAS A LOT MORE TERRITORY TO COVER THIS TIME. SO PUT IT IN GEAR. THERE ARE FLICKIES TO RESCUE. POWER-UPS TO GRAB. AND MOVES LIKE THE BLAST ATTACK THAT MAKE THIS SONIC THE FASTEST AND WILDEST YOU'VE EVER SEEN.



NEW SONIC GAMES NOW AVAILABLE ON
GENESIS, GAME GEAR AND PC.

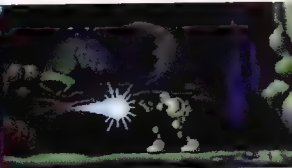
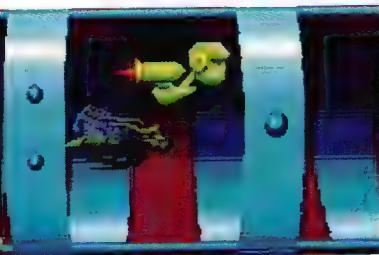
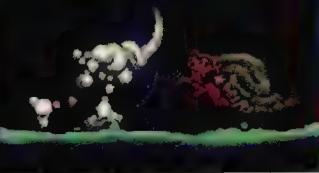
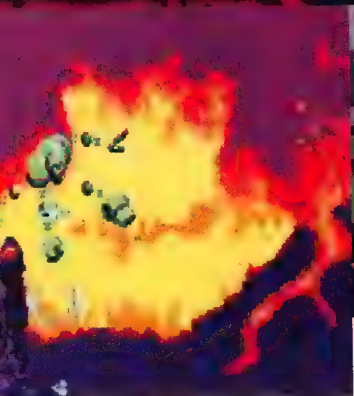
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OR MAKE WASTE.

VECTORMANTM 2

WITH A LOAD OF NEW MORPHS AND THE MOTHERLODE OF NEW WEAPONS, VECTORMAN NOW HAS EVEN MORE WAYS TO TURN HIS MUTANT INSECT ENEMIES INTO LANDFILL. DO BATTLE AS A SCORPION, A GIANT TICK, OR A RHINO BEETLE. OR JUST DO A TON OF DAMAGE WITH THE FIREBALL, THE BOOT BLAST, OR THE OVERKILL. SPARE NOTHING. SHOOT EVERYTHING.

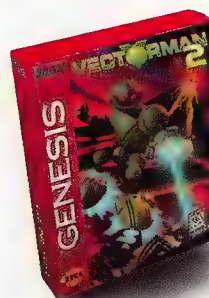


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For more info, visit Sega's web site at <http://www.sega.com> or on CompuServe at GO SEGA.

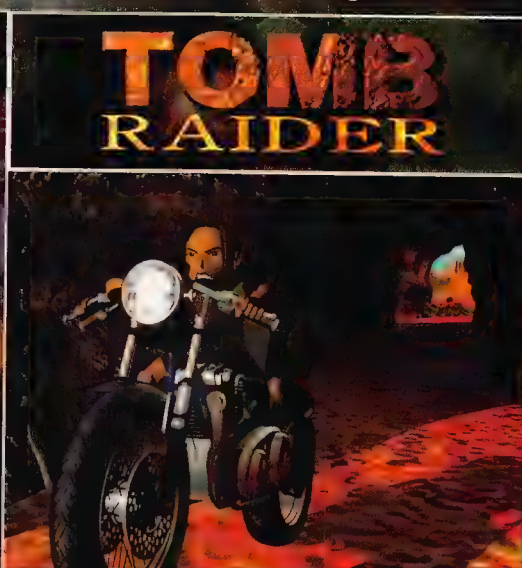




Three years ago when I was talking to Jeremy Smith about Core's vision for the ultimate 32-bit adventure game, who'd have thought it would end up one of the best games ever made? After playing the perfect platformer, Crash Bandicoot, and then the best adventure, Super Mario 64, I felt lucky to have experienced what I feel were 2 perfect games for '96. At present however, I am utterly shocked because now, there's not only a third, but of the three, in my opinion, Tomb Raider is the best. As they did before, my critics will come at me again. After scoring CB a perfect 100, friends commented they felt the game was great, but not perfect. Of course my follow up question was, did you complete the game with every gem? In every case, the answer was no. As it was in Super Mario World, and always shall be, the challenge beyond simply completing a game when applicable, is there for a reason. Completing SM64 with 120 stars vs. the far less you actually need, cuts out a lot of the game. The same rings true for Crash. In Tomb Raider, it's the secrets. There are many in each area and finding them only adds to the perfection that is this awesome game.

**CORE
PRESENTS**

Newly-named Lara Croft is on a quest parallel to just about every Indiana Jones adventure in the book. We've got ancient artifacts, sleeping gods,



greedy financiers, and rival fortune hunters. The difference? Lara's an astounding babe, and this is an astounding story that unfolds as you play a game, not watch a movie. Seein' it's one thing, but doin' it... hard to describe.

So, let's get to it shall we. We begin with Lara herself, the most graceful and fun to control video game character of all time. Lara does many things - so many, in fact, that you'll often feel you are controlling a living, breathing woman. The list of commands is as follows: Jump up, run, jump forward, jump back, lunge, grab onto & pull up, side jump, back flip, reverse spin, hand stand into cartwheel, walk, strafe, backflip, push, pull, pick up, view angles, and shoot. Now, you want to hear something really interesting...



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NBA Entertainment, Inc.

TOMB RAIDER

**R
REVIEW**



DEVELOPER - CORE

PUBLISHER - EIDOS

FORMAT - CD

OF PLAYERS - 1

DIFFICULTY - ADVANCED

AVAILABLE - NOVEMBER



E. Storm
I'm speechless.

they all become second nature in a matter of minutes! Complex, yes; confusing, no. Lara has perfect control. But it goes beyond that. Position her in front of a pushable item, hold x and push forward and watch as Lara gives three realistic pushes so real it's scary, complete with straining grunts and groans. Lara's voice by the way is soft and British. She is the consummate cool chick, and she's all yours.

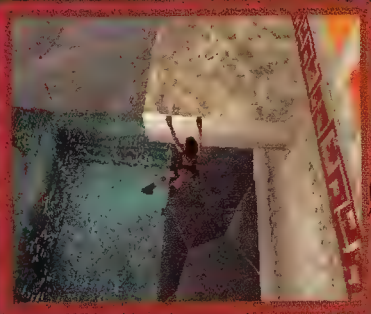
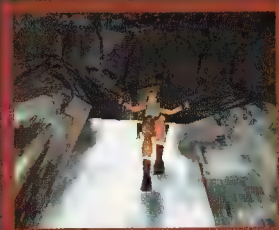
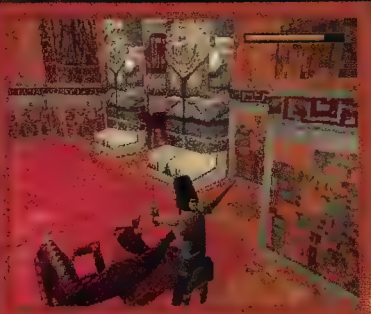
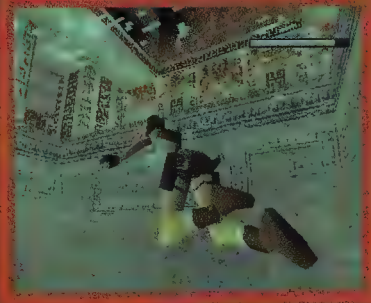
Of course, what purpose would all this trickery serve without the proper locales? That's where three years of development comes into play. The areas in Tomb Raider, spanning the globe from caves to exotic temples and treacherous fortresses are not only the most vast over any previous game (yes, even Mario), but they are so brilliantly designed and bursting with exploratory gameplay that it overloads the spirit with awe and joy. A single area can take well over an hour to beat early in the game. Later levels, depending on how good you are, will take much longer. Saint Francis' Folly, for

instance, the first area in the second quest holds four doors harnessing four gods. Inside a towering fortress 100s of feet high and laced with platforms, you must first find each door's switch, and then locate the chambers themselves. Once inside you must secure a key, and then escape. To activate this portion of the folly, you must first open a room filled





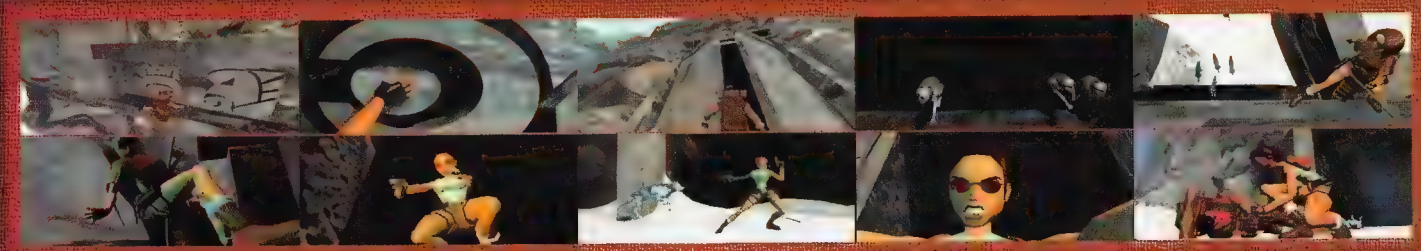
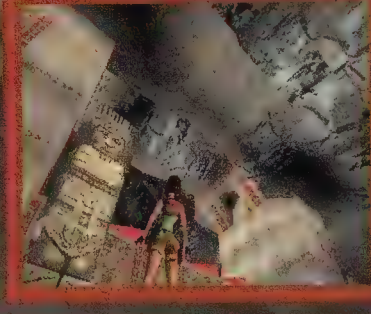
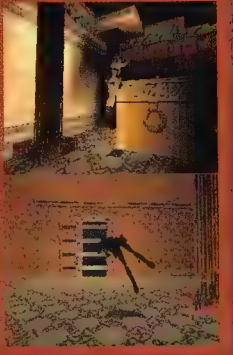
Lara's guide loses his life early on, as Lara opens the first tomb. A pack of blood-thirsty wolves will dine on his bones. Lara tries in vein to save him... but what a ride!



with wild apes, avoid your nemesis fortune hunter, kill two ferocious lions and negotiate some treacherous jumps. The keys, by the way, open a door at the



GO
AHEAD
AND
JUMP!



I MAY LOOK LIKE A MILLION
BUCKS BUT STARE TOO
LONG AND I'LL GILL YOU
FULL OF LEAD



WATCH THE
JUMPS TOO.
BOY, I'VE GOT A
SCHEDULE TO DO.
CARRERS

PARA

VAST
DOES
NOT
BEGIN
TO
DESCRIBE
IT

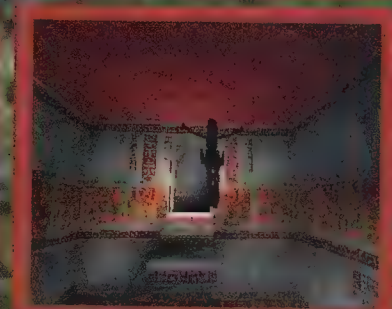
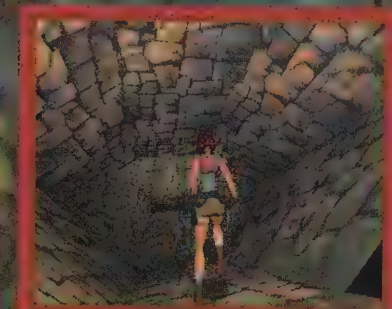
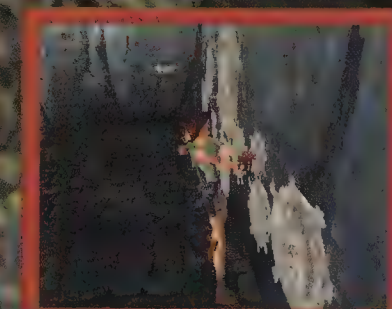
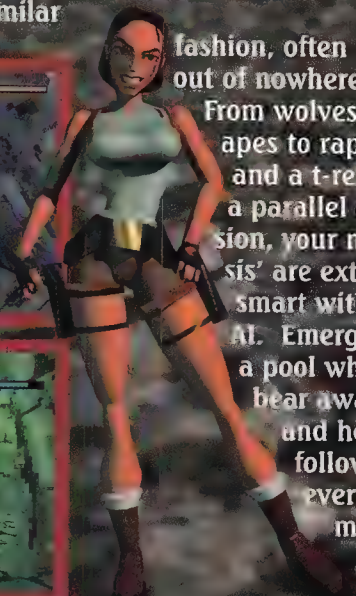
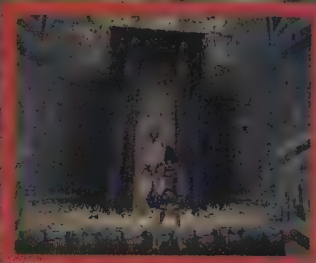
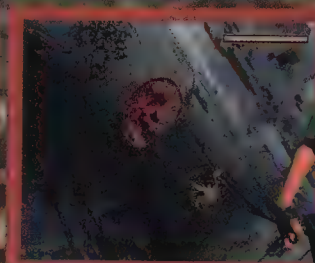
ENTER
THE
JUNGLE
AND
FIGHT
TO THE
DEATH!

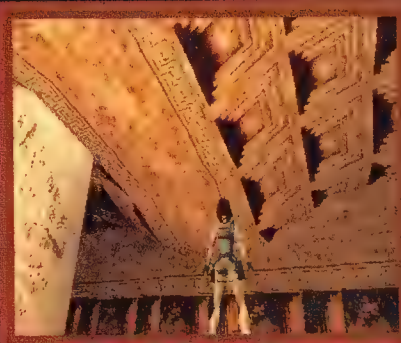


fortress floor, and from there... well, you get the point. All the while situations are brought to life through ambient music that begins and plays through certain events. You hear only your footsteps and the sounds of nature around you until something is about to happen, when music from the heavens chimes in, sending chills down your spine. Enemies attack in a similar

fashion, often coming out of nowhere.

From wolves and apes to raptors and a t-rex from a parallel dimension, your nemesis' are extremely smart with scary AI. Emerge from a pool where a bear awaits and he will follow your every move. I've no



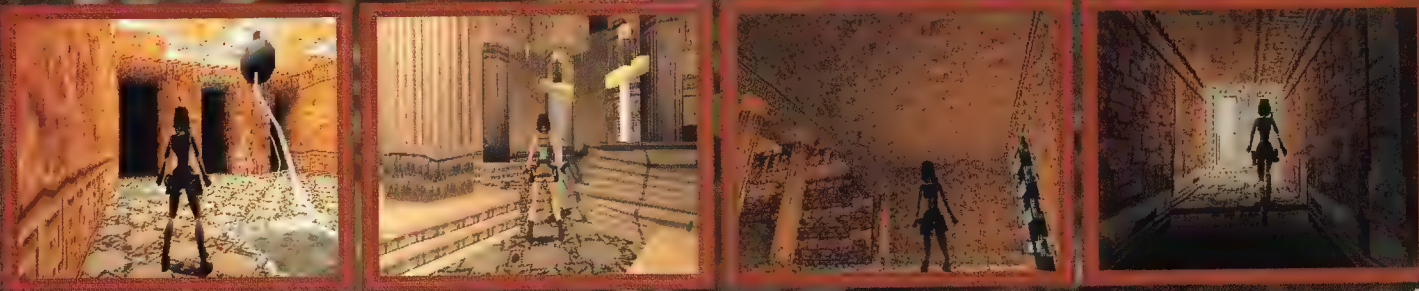


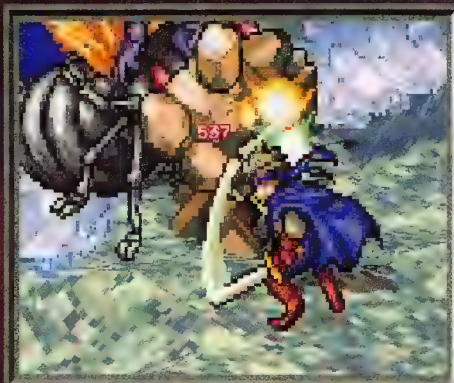
space to speak of the CG and attached story but I assure you it is as spectacular. Sadly, the Saturn version of TR is but a shell of the godly PS version, which is so good, I would urge you to rent or buy a

PS just to enjoy this version. FFXVII's coming so you may as well. One thing is for sure, Tomb Raider for the PlayStation gets my vote for game of the year - and perhaps of all time. **ES**



IT DOESN'T GET ANY BETTER





Suikoden

幻想水滸伝



Next month is Megawards month, and I can't tell you how much I was looking forward to the heated fight in the RPG category: Lucienne's Quest for 3DO or Lufia 2 for SNES! I can't believe it's really come to this... A full year and that's all the RPG selection we get? Okay, to be fair, Riglord Saga/Mystaria/Blazing Whatever-it-Ended-Up-Being-Called was released for the Saturn, but that's more of a strategy title. And Beyond the Beyond has to be disqualified due to a small technicality (that it sucks).

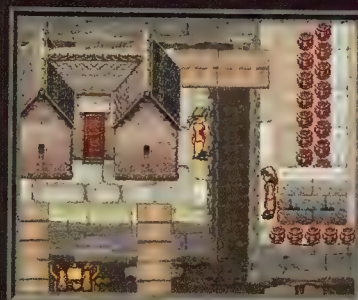
But, thanks to Konami, a game that actually deserves to win has emerged at the last minute: Genso Suikoden is here! I was a huge fan of the Japanese version (covered in Vol. 4 Iss. 2 and Vol. 4 Iss. 4), and the American translation has recreated it all perfectly (except for the "Genso" part).

Suikoden is the story of a young boy born into a prestigious house of the Red Moon Empire. His father, Teo, is one of the empire's five legendary generals, and a close friend of the emperor. His father's wealth has insured him a childhood of comfort, and he shares his luxurious home with many friends, guardians, and one freakishly obsessed male nanny named Gremio. As the game begins, Teo is heading out of the capitol to put down some rebellion in the North, and his son is anxiously anticipating his first day of service to the empire.

But his experiences with the empire quickly leave a bitter taste in his mouth. The empire has become corrupt and power-crazed over the years, and soon our hero finds himself in an unthinkable situation; an imperial general's son whose sympathies come to lie with the underground revolutionary army.

There are no demon lords to slay in Suikoden: Your quest is to assemble a trustworthy army, build an impenetrable fort, and overthrow the empire, your beloved father included. There are 107 characters who will join you on your quest (as well as countless peons who join for the large scale battles), aiding you in everything from direct combat to laundry duty. An abandoned island fortress becomes your headquarters, and a valuable symbol of your progress as it grows from a single dirty room to an 8-floor tower housing shops, storerooms, living quarters, libraries, prisons, laboratories, baths, gardens, fields, and more.

In my opinion, this is a storyline capable of making any game interesting. But Suikoden offers a lot more than just that: The game's fast-paced battle system is equally innov-



R REVIEW



PlayStation

DEVELOPER - KONAMI

PUBLISHER - KONAMI

FORMAT - CD

OF PLAYERS - 1

DIFFICULTY - INTERMEDIATE

AVAILABLE - DECEMBER

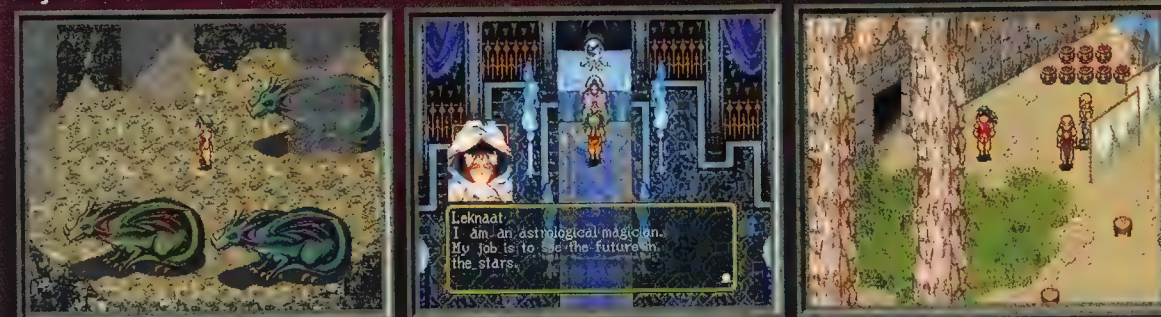


TAKUHI

ative, the magic system is ingenious, and the occasional war scenes are exciting, if a bit simplistic. Of course, any game with this much innovation is going to have a few unexpected hassles, and Suikoden is no exception: You can't really get the most of it unless you constantly rotate your party members, and the constant unequipping and equipping this requires quickly becomes tedious. Even worse, you'll have to be good at remembering names, for you get only the characters' names, not pictures, when picking your roster.

My only other complaint with Suikoden is in the bland, motionless overhead graphics. Luckily, the quality is much higher in the beautiful (and beautifully animated) battle scenes. Finally, it would be a grave injustice not to mention Suikoden's brilliant, luscious soundtrack. You've just got to hear it to believe it.

So, finally, we have our first 32-bit RPG epic. Suikoden isn't just a great game relative to the small, unimpressive crop of RPGs that trickle out here every year, it truly is a great game by any objective standard. T



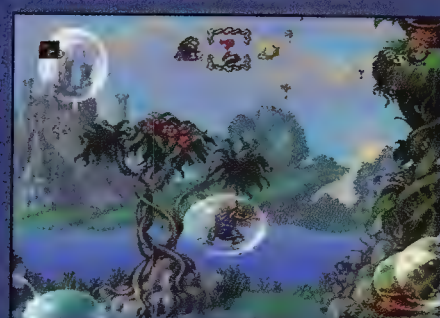
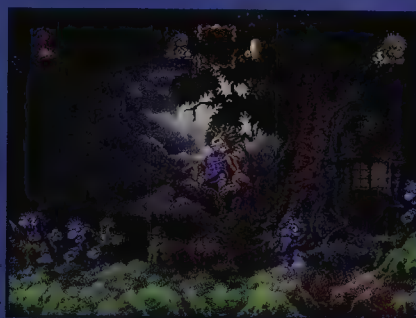
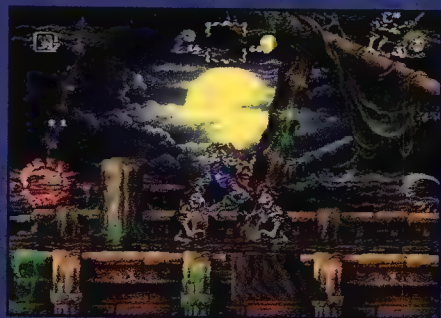
Lomax & Evil Ed take Good vs Evil to a whole new level.

44 of them to be precise.

If you want to fight evil, then you'd better be ready to go the distance. The mischievous Lomax is in way over his head. But only he has the power to conquer Evil Ed and break the diabolical hex that has been placed on his friends.

Zoom in & out of detailed landscapes up to 10 layers deep. Use amazing flame-thrower helmets, helicopter helmets and many more, to vanquish evil.

But look out. The Adventures of Lomax can be habit forming, and that's something even you may not be strong enough to fight.



The Adventures Of *Tiomax*



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www.psygnosis.com



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P PREVIEW



DEVELOPER - REFLECTIONS

PUBLISHER - PSYGNOSIS

FORMAT - CD

OF PLAYERS - 1-2

DIFFICULTY - ADVANCED

AVAILABLE - DECEMBER



CHIEF HAMBLETON
SIT BACK AND WATCH
MORE CAR CARNAGE!

DESTRUCTION DERBY 2



That deluge of Brit-based software just keeps on a-comin'! The follow-up to the fun but flawed *Destruction Derby* has finally been granted a release, and this time the Newcastle-based Reflections is hard at work improving all aspects of the game. From the 90 percent complete version of the game that I played, I can tell you this is a simple revamp of the original. *DD* fans are likely to be fairly twitching with delight, but although I'm a real racing fan, I and many others were never taken with the original; any problems that Reflections have kept for the sequel shall be dealt with in the review. For now, let's look at the extra features which makes *DD2* stand out from the increasingly congested crowd of 32-bit racers.

DD2's main advantage is that it's the only racer where bits come off your stock car (flying off in heaps of triangular polygon shards) and wrecking is the name of the game, but this time, there's banked courses (a real bonus which allows huge jumps and spins to be attempted!), lens flare (both in the midday sun and from night-time street lamps), four bowl arenas (where you essentially press accelerate and watch your car get demolished), more extensive crashing; and most exciting of all; real pit-stops!!

Yep, now you can race away, side-swipe a couple of drone cars and get your wing repaired all in the same lap. This is a really cool-sounding idea except for one nagging flaw; the moment you pit in, all your opponents streak by (and they never have to pit themselves), meaning that the pit serves no real purpose whatsoever. I'm hoping for some major rethinking in time for the release (but I ain't holding my breath). What I can say is that unlike *Wipeout XL*, this game is hard; mind-numbingly hard. One slight oversteer sends you spinning into 19 other bloodthirsty competitors. Those with previous *DD* experience (there should be a few, it sold phenomenally) should know what to expect. Review next issue... CH





REVIEW



DEVELOPER - CAPCOM
PUBLISHER - CAPCOM
FORMAT - CD
OF PLAYERS - 1-2
DIFFICULTY - BEG.-ADV.
AVAILABLE - NOVEMBER



Getting creamed at SFA2 by the staff at GF can get a bit old, so I got a certain joy as others bowed to my might in *Super Puzzle Fighter II-X*. (Ego? Nah...) I'm a HUGE *Puyo Puyo Tsu* fan, and *Puzzle Fighter* is quite similar, so I clicked with this one right away. Plus, I mean, who could resist such exaggerated versions of some of the *SFA2* and *Nightwarriors* crew?

Being honest, the game itself is rather average. Colored gems fall from the sky in pairs of two, and join with others of the same color if they touch in any direction. Spheres fall as well, and dropping one on top of, or next to, gems of matching color makes them vanish. Just as in *Puyo*, the real reward comes from setting your gems up so that once one set disappears, it will cause a chain reaction as the other blocks fall, sending penalty blocks to your opponent's side. Sound pretty simple? It is, but at least it's not a bad puzzle game engine (despite the whines of it being too easy to destroy the other player by those who lost to me).

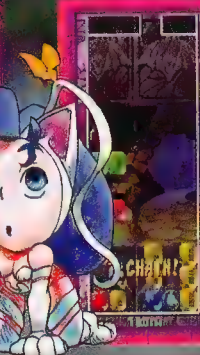
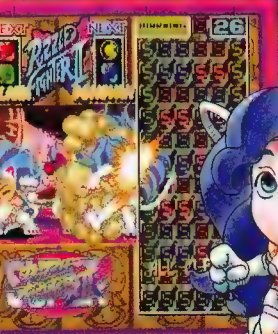
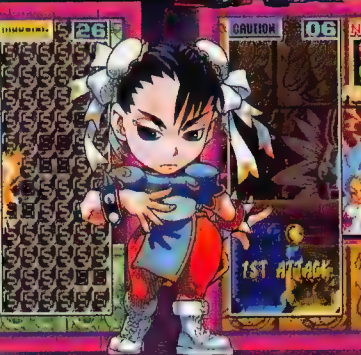
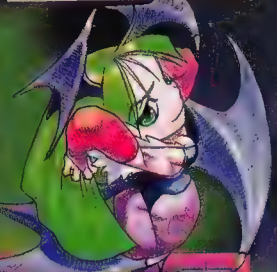
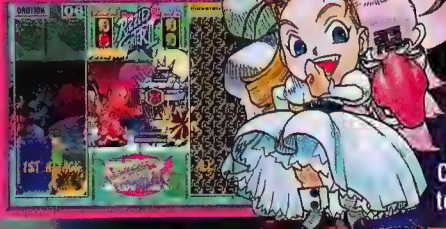
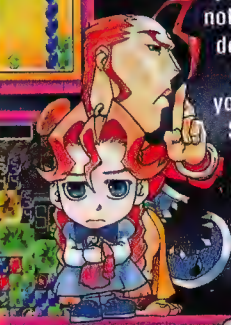
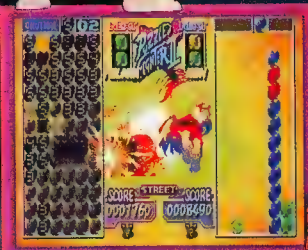
Puzzle Fighter's uniqueness is its tie to *SFA2* and *Nightwarriors*. By giving you and your rival the ability to pick specific characters (Byu, Ken, Chun-Li, Sakura, Morrigan, Lei-Lei, Donovan, and Felicia), winning isn't just winning anymore; it's a contest of showing off. Your character attacks your opponent's, with moves depending on the type of combo you just pulled off.

Sure, it's fun to beat your friend, but even more so when the match ends with Lei-Lei pummeling that no-good Ken with a Super. The character's personal backgrounds and theme music show up as well, changed a bit to be just as cute as their owners.

Puzzle Fighter isn't too heavy puzzle wise, and this combined with the *SF/NW* theme could help those who don't normally like puzzle games enjoy this one. The only problem I had was the longing I put in my heart to see a *SF/NW Kids*. Hear me, Capcom, super-deformed Lei-Lei and Felicia are far too cool to not be used again! S



SHIDOSHI



INSTRUMENTS OF WAR

	TASHA	REG. SHOT-FLAME- 
	RAY	REG. SHOT-SPREAD SHOT-FLAME- 
	C.D.-288	REG. SHOT-FLAME-SPREAD SHOT- 
	BUBBA	REG. SHOT-FLAME-SPREAD SHOT- 

LIGHT 'EM
IF YOU
GOT 'EM
CONTRA'S
BACK!

CONTRA

legacy of war

R REVIEW



DEVELOPER - APPALOOSA

PUBLISHER - KONAMI

FORMAT - CD

OF PLAYERS - 1-2

DIFFICULTY - ADVANCED

AVAILABLE - NOVEMBER

Appaloosa were given quite a task. Take Contra, a 2D legend dating back some ten years, create a 3D version, and stay as true as possible to the original. Fail, and you're responsible for breaking a chain of legendary hits. Succeed, and your name goes up in lights. Appaloosa have toiled hard over Contra and for a 3D actioner, I'd say they've definitely succeeded. Of course I'd have preferred my first 32-bit Contra in 2D, but I'll live. As I stated last month

most of what made Contra, well, Contra, is in here. Bullseyes that when hit explode

walls, big spiny and/or fleshy bosses, airborne power-ups you shoot out of the sky, and of course, insane difficulty. Intermediate gamers will survive the easy mode with its 4 levels, but to see all six you must step up to normal. Normal in this case being a baby step from super human. Beyond normal additional rewards await

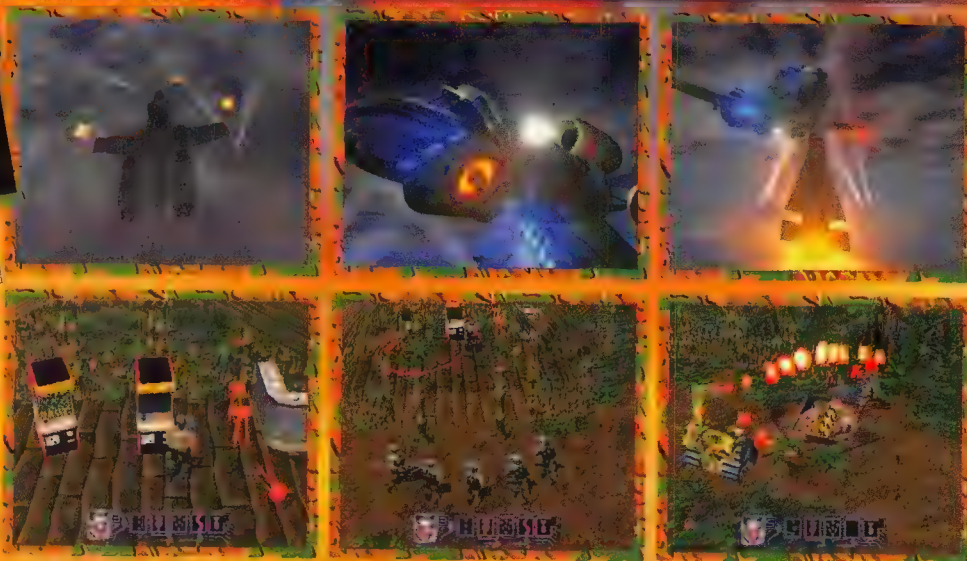


LOCK
'N LOAD!



E. Storm

A battle worth fighting... and winning.

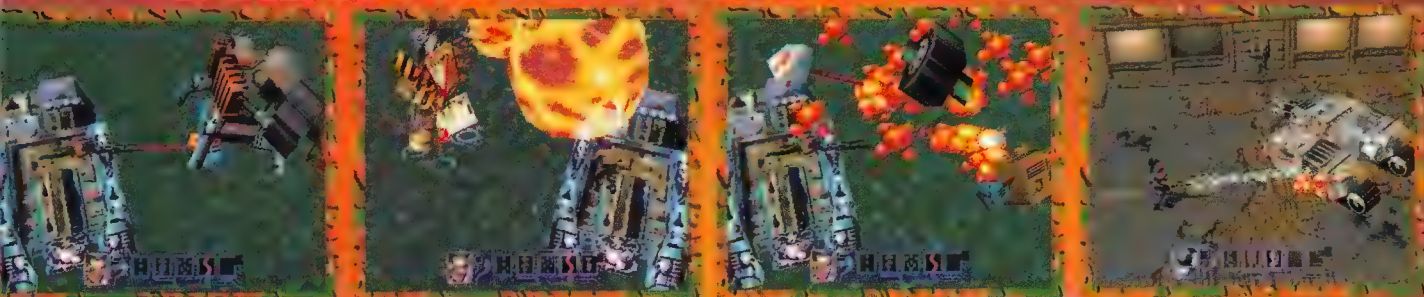


ENEMY SOLDIERS DON'T TAKE KINDLY TO YOU TRASHING THEIR ARCADE... SO KILL 'EM ALL AND WRECK THE PLACE!





BY LAND, RAFT, AND THEN BOAT, THIS IS ONE WILD RIVER! DEADLY TOO!



HIT THE DECK! THE JUNK MONSTER WILL HAVE A HARD TIME HITTING YOU LAYIN' LOW. PICTURED IN THE TOP LEFT SCREEN, SHOOT THE WALLS, THERE'S AMMO AND LIVES HIDDEN EVERYWHERE.



THIS FRIGHTENING PILE OF BILE AWAITS YOU AT THE RIVERS END. GOT BOMBS? AFTER YOU KILL IT, ENTER THE GAPING HOLE WHERE ITS HEART USED TO BE... FLESHY!



the master gamer who beats *Legacy* on hard. This, however, will take an iron will.

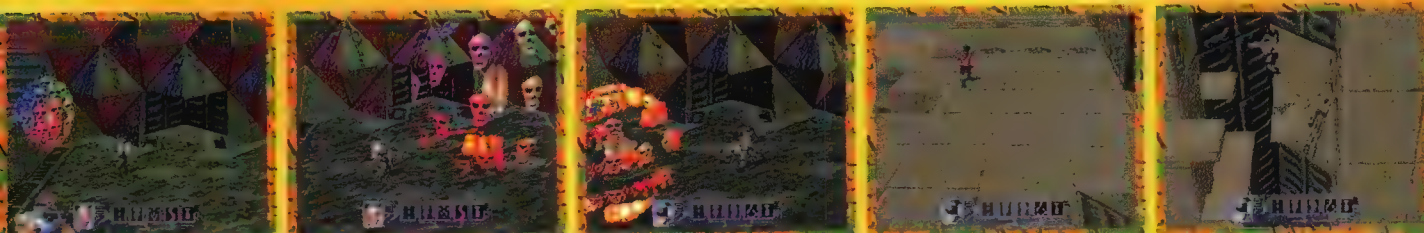
Appaloosa's 3D engine, which scrolls along in every direction as you attack the game, has amazing depth and is one of the cleanest looking 3D polygons I've ever seen. The textures are highly detailed. It crowds you once in awhile but for the most part is a work of genius.

In the control dept. I found the jumping a tad floaty and uncontrollable while airborne, but precision jumping rarely comes into play. When it does, pray you've got full health. Each character (Bubba's the fastest, Ray the strongest) can strafe at the touch of a button, shoot and crawl laying flat, and toggle between 4 standard issue (provided you grab the flying icon) Contra weapons. They're each animated pretty well, except for jumping and swivelling while laying flat, where few frames are used.

The bosses in Contra, (especially the descending one below) really steal the show. They are fluid, big, and as nasty as ever. Appaloosa has succeeded in creating pattern worthy bosses (reminiscent of those 8-bit foes) in a 3D environment.

Most importantly, *Contra LOW* is intense fun, the kind Contra fans crave, and a worthy sequel. The 3D goggles, by the way, as a novelty, are a cool little bonus as well. I buy anything with red/blue goggles, as a rule.

Rumor has it the next Contra will be 2D... Whether it is or not, I'm happy to see Kenami going back to their roots, honoring both their sports and action traditions. I only need see the logo to know... power's comin'.



A MASSIVE GLOBE OF POLTERGEISTS!

THE MOUNTAIN RETREAT - HIGH AND WIDE!



R REVIEW



DEVELOPER - MINDSCAPE

PUBLISHER - MINDSCAPE

FORMAT - CD

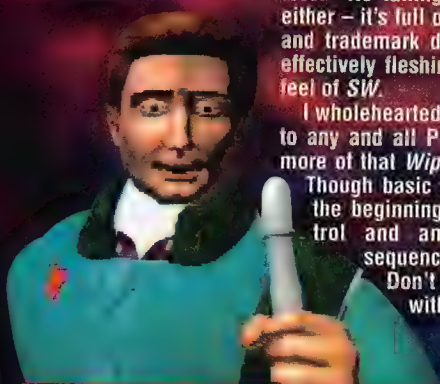
OF PLAYERS - 1

DIFFICULTY - ADVANCED

AVAILABLE - NOVEMBER



NICK ROX
NICE MICROPHONE!



STARWINDER

SPACE AWAITS!

Every once in a while an obscure, no-hype game will rise above the sea of PlayStation mediocrity. *Starwinder* is one such game. At first glance (and indeed for the first few minutes of play) *Starwinder* appears to be intensely boring: You're basically on tracks inside tunnels, viewing the same scenery over and over. After you clear the first planet, however, the game completely changes: No longer are you confined to tunnels, and the racing takes on a hectic, breakneck pace that can be compared, in terms of speed and excitement, to *Wipeout XL*.

According to Mindscape, they've tried to place a heavy emphasis on storyline, and indeed the prologue reads like something out of a Frederick Pohl novel: As Earthmen and other interstellar races expand into space, they have discovered gigantic, twisting rails hanging in the cosmos. Whether they were left by some long-forgotten alien race is unknown, but what the citizens of the galaxy do know is that spaceships travel faster when they come in contact with the glowing rails in the center of these tracks. With their true use unclear, people begin to use them as racetracks. As Earth's first competitor in these races, Connor Rhodes, your ambition is to prove the power of Earth and make it to the final track... at Epsilon Indi.

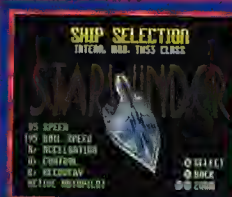
Once out of the initial tunnelage, the tracks (an incredible amount; over 35) become much more detailed, from craggy half-circles to winding, looping tubes flanked by observation towers and polygonal asteroids. Because of the amount of tracks, the game is not as detailed as, say, *Ridge Racer Revolution*, but it moves at 60 fps and you NEVER see pixels. Also impressive are the beautiful explosions and the superdetailed, imaginative enemy craft.

The gameplay is simple, but innovative: You're on tracks that have a pulsating red light running down the middle of them. Stay near it, and you'll go faster, stray from it and you slow down. The interesting thing about this system is that eventually you're going to have to leave the red strip, however briefly, to get hidden power-ups or to avoid enemies. Once you stray too far from the track, however, you'll fly off into deep space. Luckily, Mindscape has included an "autopilot" feature to guide you back to the track. An exciting racing system indeed, but that's not all there is to *Starwinder*. You also have an extensive arsenal of weaponry. There are four different armaments (including the basic shot), as well as mines and war icons. Your guns are necessary, too: You're constantly beset by drone racers whose only directive is to hinder you.

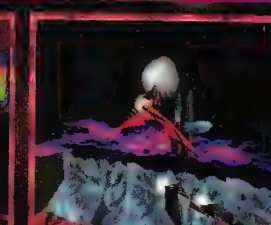
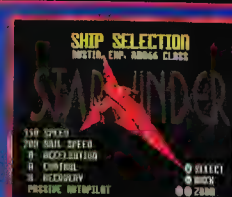
As I said before, the graphics are not high-detail but they're very smooth and, well, *cleaner* than most of the recent PlayStation fare. Pixelization is a non-issue, even when the gorgeous explosions are full-screen, and break-up is hardly ever seen. The is to be expected with tracks as basic as these, but it's a welcome sight nonetheless. No failings in the sound category, either - it's full of booming classical tunes and trademark deep-space sound effects, effectively fleshing out the "space opera" feel of SW.

I wholeheartedly recommend *Starwinder* to any and all PlayStation fans who want more of that *Wipeout* action/shooting feel. Though basic at times (especially near the beginning), its excellent play control and amusing bounty of FMV sequences will keep you riveted. Don't let this one pass you by without giving it a chance!

NR



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MORE KILLER TECHNO
MORE FLAWLESS ALTERNATIVE**



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**In 2096 Having a Bomb
Strapped to You is a Sport.**



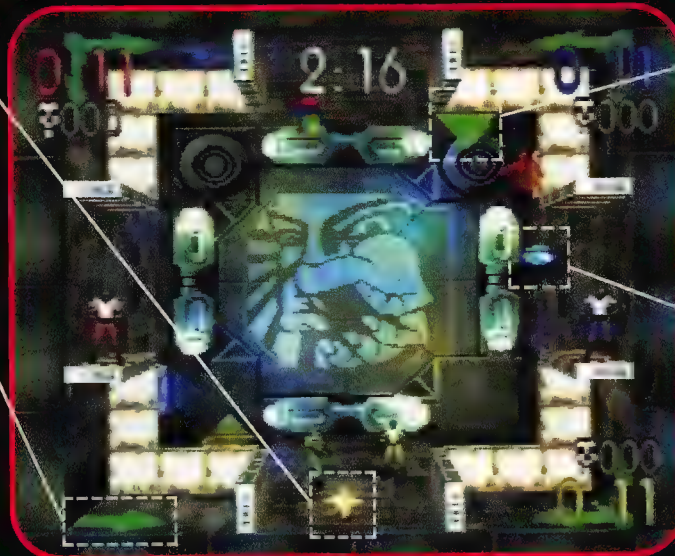
(Want to Play?)

The Crystal

Drop it in your reactor to increase your time.

The Kickers

Kicking these rotates the chamber 90 degrees.



The Reactors

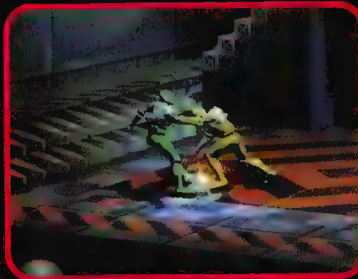
Drop the crystal in an opponent's reactor to drain his Kill-Clock.

The Power-Ups

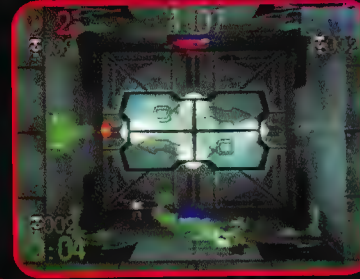
Hi-Jumps, Crystal Bombs, Mercuries, Mag Boots & more.



Your arena is a rotating chamber...
Turn it left. Turn it right.
Turn the wall into a floor.



Your goal is survival...
In this multiplayer deathmatch,
it's every man for himself.



Your opponent is time...
Because when your clock hits zero,
you're cooked.

BLAST CHAMBER™

The 3-D Rotatable Deathmatch



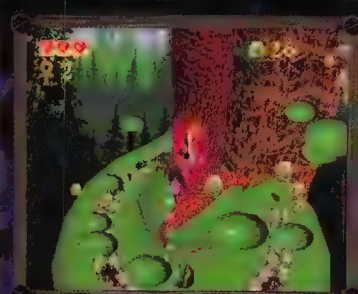
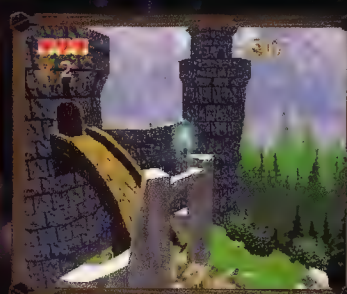
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R
REVIEW



DEVELOPER - CRYSTAL DYN.

PUBLISHER - EA

FORMAT - CD

OF PLAYERS - 1

DIFFICULTY - INTERMEDIATE

AVAILABLE - NOVEMBER



Better than the
Renaissance
Fair! Cheaper
too!

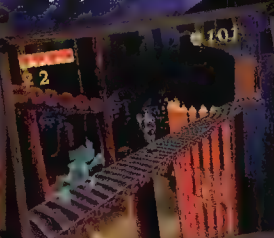
MAGIC AT YOUR FINGERTIPS...



RED AURA:
DISINTEGRATE
THE ENEMY!



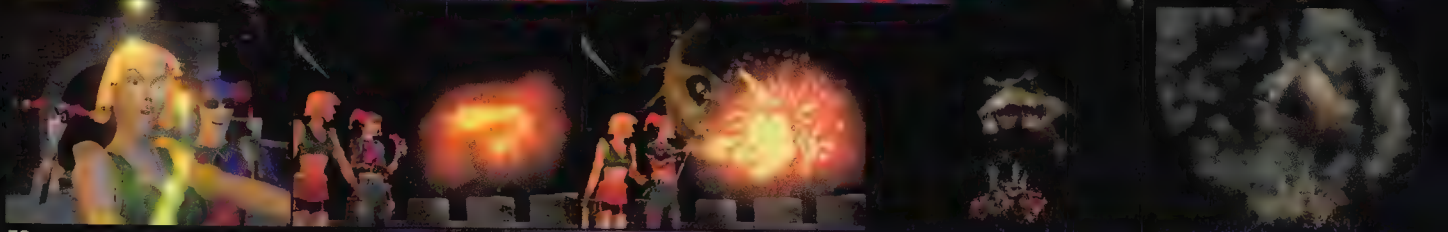
BLUE AURA:
FREEZE AND THEN SHATTER YOUR PREY!

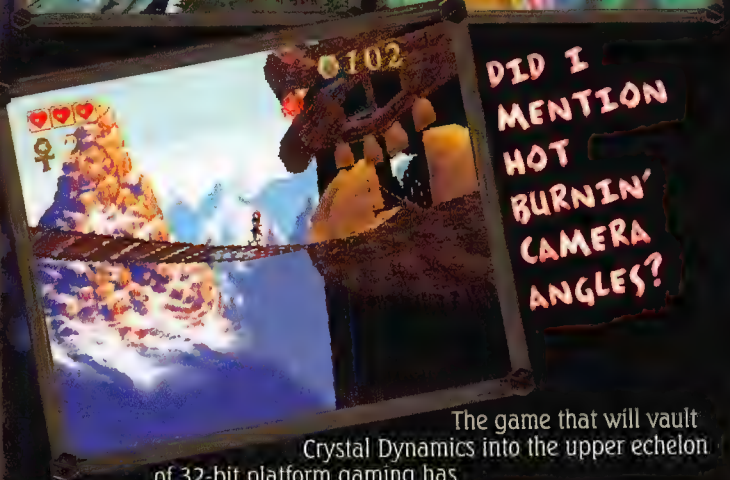
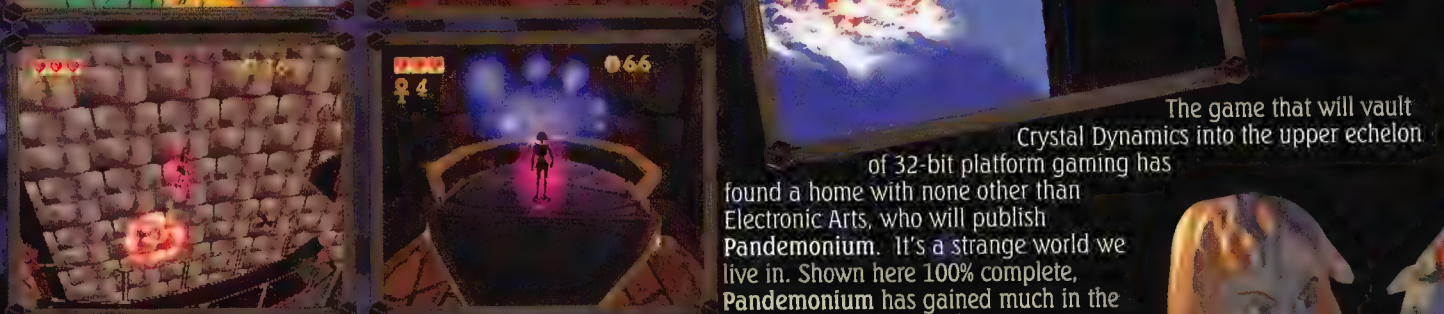
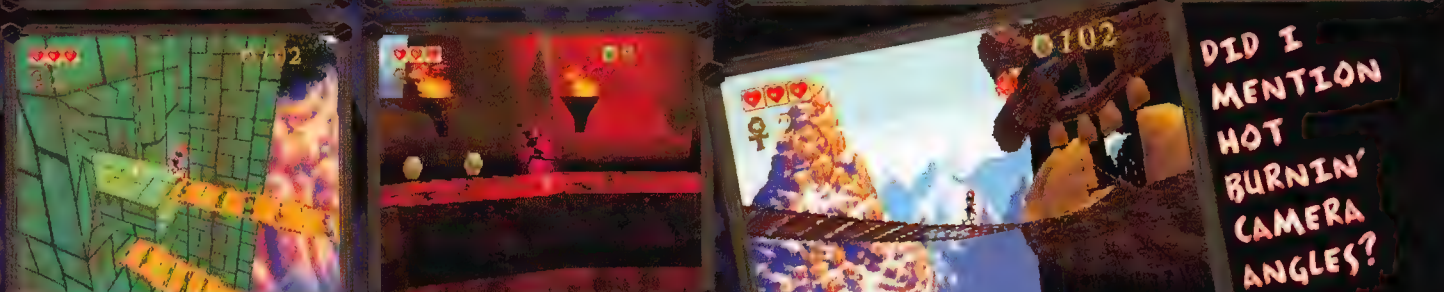
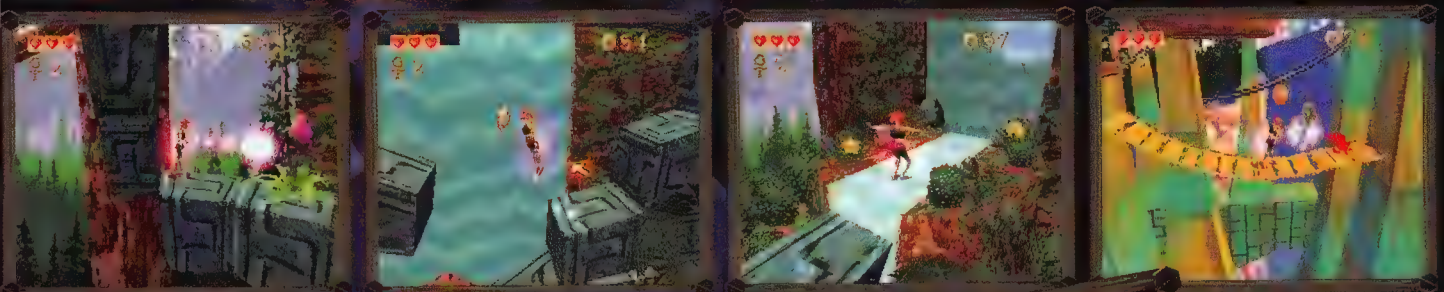


YELLOW AURA:
SHRINK THE ENEMY AND RENDER
THEM HELPLESS!



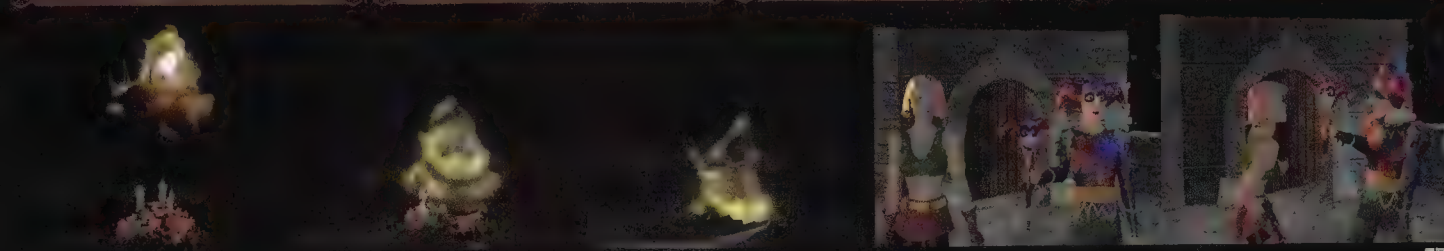
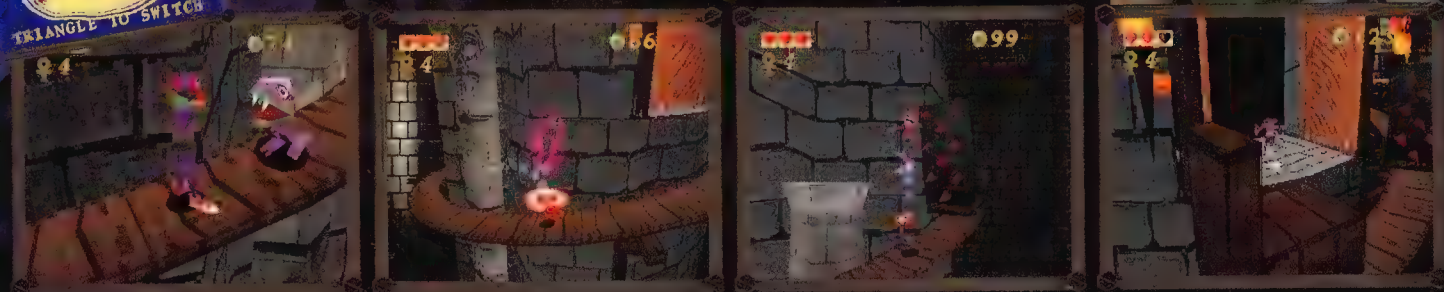
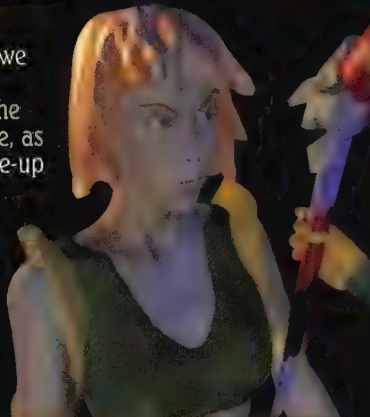
PANKRATIUM!

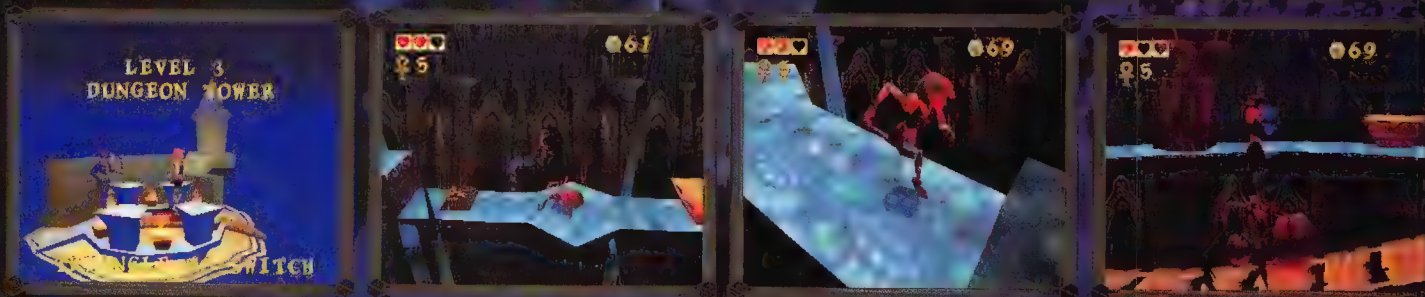
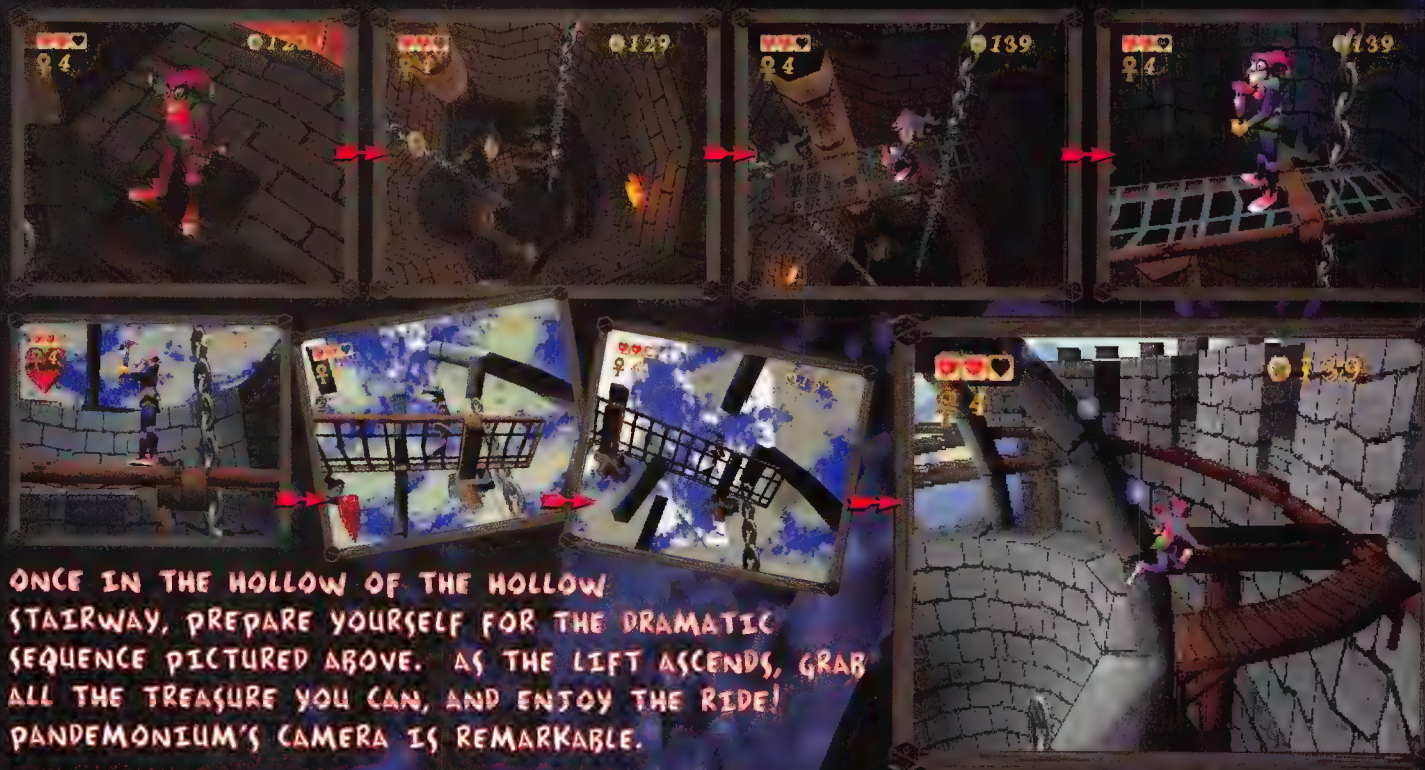




The game that will vault Crystal Dynamics into the upper echelon of 32-bit platform gaming has found a home with none other than Electronic Arts, who will publish **Pandemonium**. It's a strange world we live in. Shown here 100% complete, **Pandemonium** has gained much in the final tweaking stages and has become, as

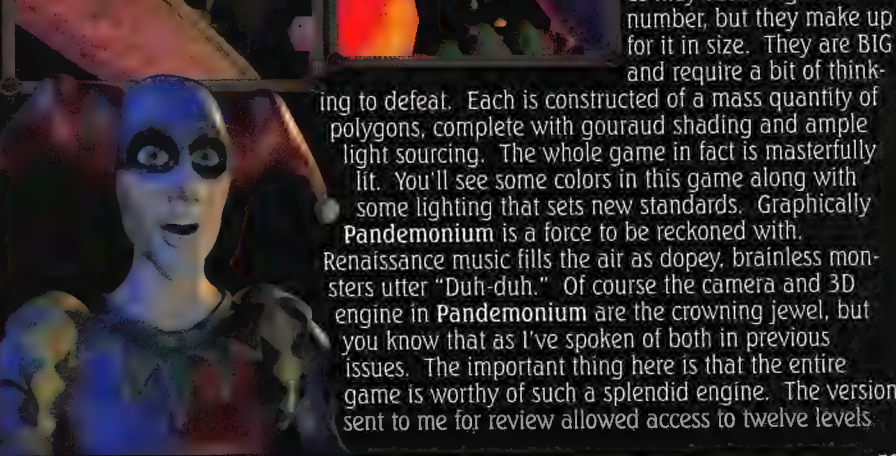
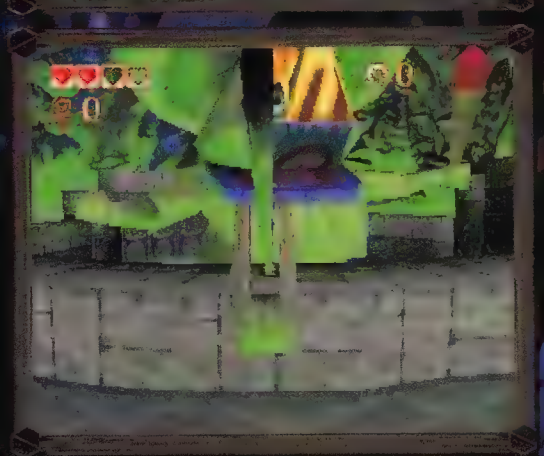
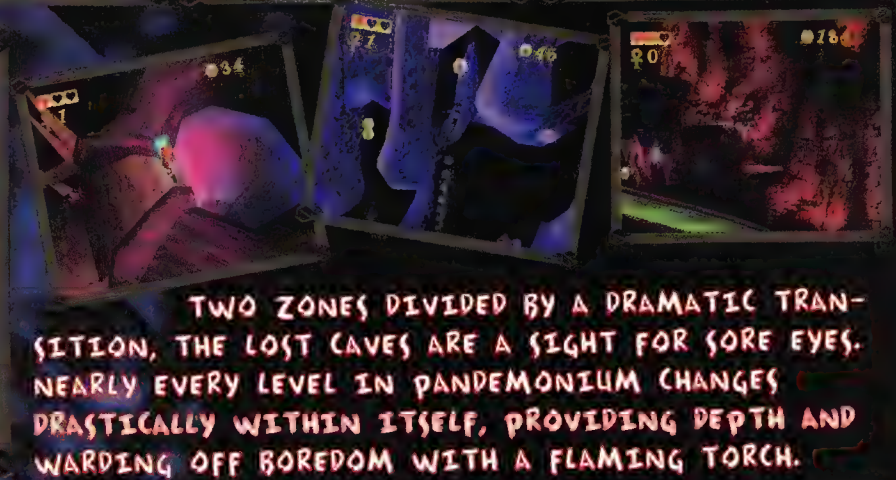
we thought it would, a force to be reckoned with. With **Crash** and now **Pandemonium** entering the Sony line-up with **MegaMan** and **Castlevania** close behind, the PlayStation is fast becoming the do-everything platform. With the action/platform void filled, the PS now truly has something for everybody... and things are just getting started. As you can plainly see, **Pandemonium** looks amazing, but thankfully it's not just so much window dressing. The gameplay, depth, story, and soundtrack are all of the utmost quality. This is a sequel-worthy platformer if there ever was one. The gameplay, for the most part, is pure right-and-left platforming, broken up only by the humongous bosses which are played out in a circular arena. As Nikki or Fargus, your job is to rid the kingdom of Yungo, the monster Nikki

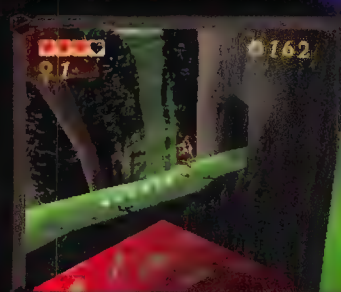
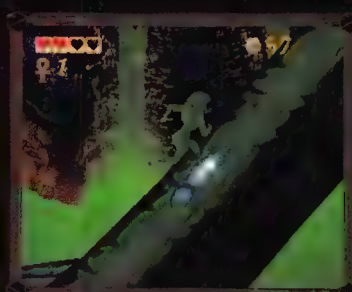




unleashed whilst her and Fergus were having fun with a book of spells in the castle tower. A map in the book shows the path (whom you can choose to play at the beginning of each level) the path to the Wishing Engine, where a wish can be cast to rid the land of the hideous beast. Of course, a variety of enemies and obstacles stand in their way. Dopey goons, mushroom monsters, dragonflies, spiders, and reptiles inhabit like areas and each have their own unique form of attack. Besides bouncing on them, three different spells are available to send them to their doom. Picking up treasure along the way (like Sonic's rings, or Mario's coins) is highly recommended. 200 pieces earns you a one-up and a high over all percentage a trip to the colorful bonus round. Adding even more madness to the fray, walk through a magical gate and you're trans-



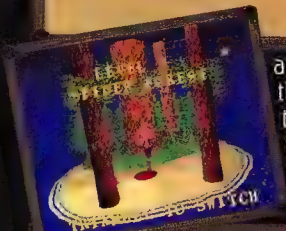




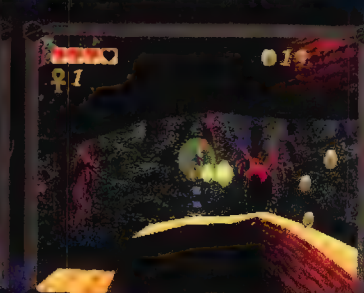
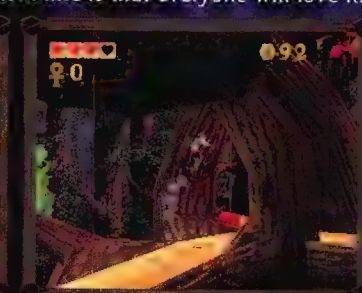
HATE MUSHROOMS? HOW 'BOUT STINKY GREEN ACID? WELCOME TO THE ACID POOLS, WHERE FUNGUS RULES THE DAY AND FIERCE LITTLE MUSHROOMS WING THEIR HEADS YOUR WAY. PUT A FORK IN IT, MUSHROOM BOY, I ALREADY ATE.



REPTILIAN (YET DOG-LIKE) CREATURES SLUMBER PEACEFULLY IN THE DESERT... UNTIL YOU WAKE 'EM UP. YOU CAN'T KILL THESE LIGHT SLEEPERS SO RUN FOR IT! USE HEDGEHOGS AS LAUNCHING PADS.

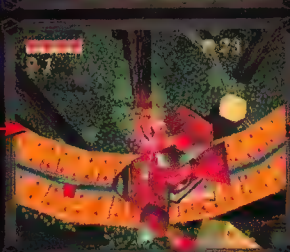
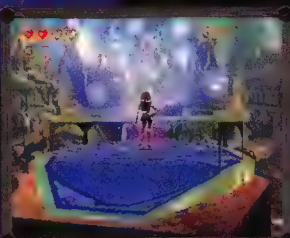


and the first two bosses. I suppose EA didn't want us to show the end, as it should be. I began, rocketing through the first half dozen, thinking the game was too easy, but it does get progressively more difficult. By the 8th stage things begin to get pleasingly difficult, especially if you attempt to reach the game's many secret areas rather than racing through on the easiest path. Overall, intermediate gamers should find Pandemonium a handful, pros will race through and then go back for more, and beginners will be heavily challenged, a good balance overall. The bottom line is that everyone will love it.

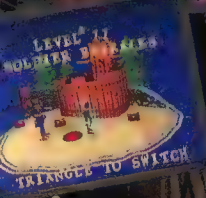
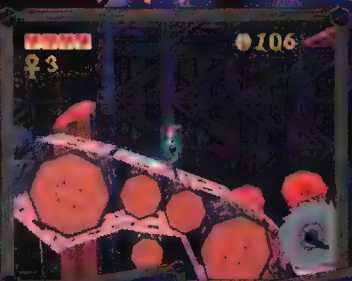




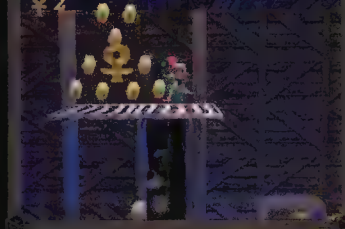
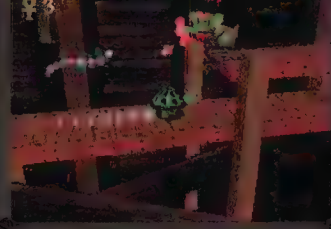
'BREATHTAKING' BEST DESCRIBES CANOPY VILLAGE. THE CAMERA WORKS OVERTIME AS YOU PLATFORM AMONG GODLY SCENERY. COMPLETE THE LEVEL AS A TURTLE AND REALIZE THE TRUE MEANING OF MUST-SEE TV!



HE'S THE HAMMER... YOU'RE THE NAIL, IF YOU CATCH MY DRIET.



SOME THINGS ARE BETTER LEFT UNSEEN, LIKE THE LEVELS BEYOND THIS POINT. MAKE THE PURCHASE ON THIS ONE FOLKS. PANDEMONIUM'S BURNIN' HOT.



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PRO-WRESTLING MOVE

NO. 4



THE CRANIAL CRUNCH

OVER 50 AUTHENTIC PRO-WRESTLING MOVES.
12 WRESTLERS FROM AROUND THE WORLD.
REAL-MOTION 3-D ACTION FROM MULTIPLE ANGLES.

PRO-WRESTLING MOVE NO. 16



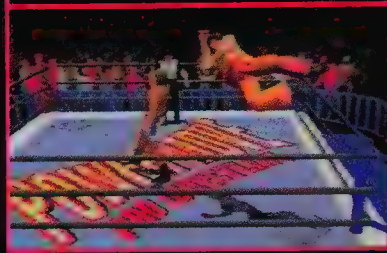
THE DRAGON SUPLEX

PRO-WRESTLING MOVE NO. 31



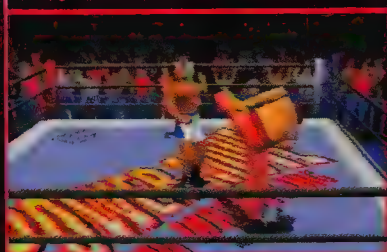
THE TURN-BUCKLE FACE PLANT

PRO-WRESTLING MOVE NO. 24



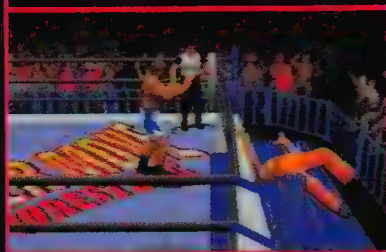
THE FLYING ELBOW DROP

PRO-WRESTLING MOVE NO. 49



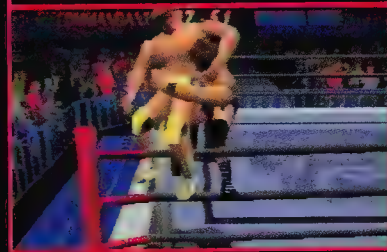
THE ROUNDHOUSE KICK

PRO-WRESTLING MOVE NO. 10



THE OUT-OF-RING BACKBREAKER

PRO-WRESTLING MOVE NO. 33



THE TURN-BUCKLE TAKE DOWN

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P PREVIEW

LAYOUT - E. STORM



DEVELOPER - SINGLETRAC

PUBLISHER - SONY

FORMAT - CD

OF PLAYERS - 1-2

DIFFICULTY - N/A

AVAILABLE - DECEMBER

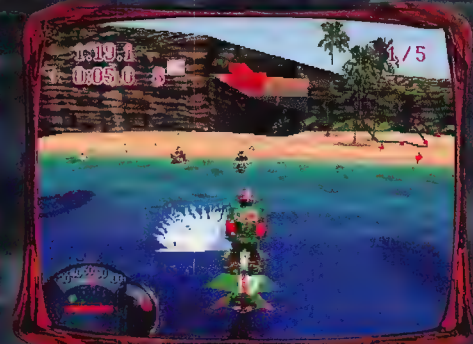
ANY RACE FAN'LL TELL YA,
IT'S ALL ABOUT CAMERAS!
3 ARE AVAILABLE IN JET
MOTO: CHASE, BEHIND,
AND THE POPULAR RIDGE
RACER "I'M SITTING ON
THE HOOD" CAM.

THESE GIRLS MEAN
BUSINESS!



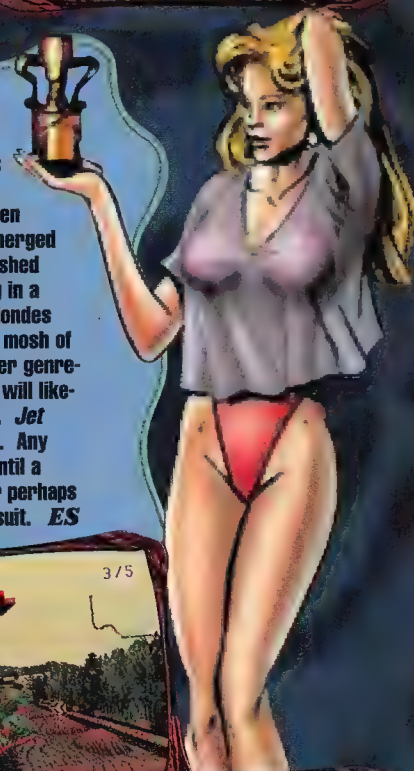
Jet Moto™

Singletrac, the talented developers responsible for *Warhawk* and *Twisted Metal*, first displayed their new racer, *Jet Moto*, at the E3 in Los Angeles this past May. At that time, much like Nintendo's E3 *WaveRace* demo, all one could fathom by playing it was that the games physics were going to be the main attraction. What we did not know about either game was what the designers would surround all this brilliant gameplay with. How does one make an H₂O racer live up to the high standards set by games like *Wipeout* and *Ridge Racer*? After all, water is a whole different animal, and in *Jet Moto*'s case, water is only half the story. These craft work on dry land too, making *Jet* somewhat of a cross between *WaveRace* and *Wipeout*. That said, I'm sure I've piqued your interest - Singletrac are hot developers and both aforementioned games thoroughly rock. Well, my fellow racers, so will this one. *Jet* does both environments complete justice. From the high seas in *Da' Kine Run* to the smooth reflective glass in *Blackwater Falls* your liquid refreshment is a real thirst quencher, with realistic physics and wide-open course design. The gameplay's equally delightful when you hit the dirt,





sand, or ice. The polygonal environments feature detailed texture maps and from the get go are as vast and twisting as any race fan could hope for. Course design at this point (3 tracks were available for preview) is right on 'Trac. *Suicide Swamp*, a vast marsh, features a wide open canyon laced with rotted stumps, tall trees, and no lanes! It's a mad scramble demolition style! Quite a stretch from the wide open abyss of *Da' Kine Run*, an oceanic cruise capitalized by a partially submerged freeway, an ancient relic from a huge quake. Adding sheen to this polished racer are the characters and the soundtrack, both of which are going in a unique direction. The riders are all women, no... babes! Hot curvy blondes and brunettes, from surfers to cowgirls... sign me up! The music is a mosh of rugged surf tunes (in the Dick Dale tradition) backwoods hick, and other genre-specific melodies depending on where you're racing. Futuristic levels will likely harness techno and so on. It's all redbook and of the utmost quality. *Jet* also accommodates two players via a very efficient split screen mode. Any loss of frame rate or slow down of course cannot be commented on until a review version arrives. Look to the January GameFan for an update or perhaps even a review, and uh, bring a wetsuit. **ES**



RACE RESULTS

1. BROWNE	2. BLACKBAC	3. CHAMBER
4. BROWN	5. TESSIE	6. BROWN
7. MACE	8. TESSIE	9. MACE
10. MASALA	11. QUEEN JESSIE	12. MASALA
13. MACE	14. MACE	15. MACE
16. MACE	17. MACE	18. MACE
19. MACE	20. MACE	21. MACE
22. MACE	23. MACE	24. MACE
25. MACE	26. MACE	27. MACE
28. MACE	29. MACE	30. MACE

RACE WINNER'S CIRCLE



DARE YOU ACCEPT AN INVITATION TO DARKNESS?!!

A TERRIFYING TALE OF REVENGE, REDEMPTION AND RESURRECTION!!

Once in a while, a new type of video game appears to carve a respectable niche for itself in unfamiliar territory; Artdink is perhaps the finest purveyor of these pioneering titles (with Aquanaut's Holiday and Tail of the Sun rating as some of the most innovative), but now Tecmo have wisely decided to release Deception, a wholly unique and totally absorbing new type of dungeon adventure. While other software companies try their hand at those inevitable Doom clones, or furnish us with a barrage of second-rate 3D polygon fighters, Tecmo has been hard at work creating an all-new masterpiece. The result is an enthralling and fiendishly addictive new slant on the 'dungeon hack.' Enter the world of Deception, where the creation of traps wins the day, evil demons are summoned and your foes' destruction is all that you crave.

The plot synopsis is suitably enchanting: In the past, a great nation known as Vangeria was host to a great multitude of prosperous magicians, while the rest of the population lived in squalor. These non-magic users rebelled against the powerful wizards, and a 500-year war began, splitting the country down the middle into Zemekia (a magical nation) and the Angelio

SET TRAPS TO KILL YOUR ENEMIES!!

TECMO'S DECEPTION

Empire. An uneasy peace was finally established until, you, the player (and the heir to the throne of Zemekia) managed to get yourself falsely accused of your father's own murder! This situation worsened immeasurably when you were hunted down, caught and lead to the chopping block. You uttered a plea for vengeance as the executioner raised his rusty battle-ax, and a strange noise was heard throughout the heavens. The entire area was scorched with

CREATE MONSTERS FROM THE FLESH OF YOUR FOES!!

magical fire and your body was winked out of existence in a brilliant flash. You appear in the Castle of the Damned with but one conviction: to exact a terrible revenge on your brother and all those who thought you guilty. The Devil must be summoned and resurrected, all the inhabitants of the castle must have their souls sucked, and the Six Legendary Treasures must be obtained! "Rise Demon, rise from the ether!"



This atmosphere of brooding menace is admirably translated into the game itself. Your hero must progress through 27 different 3D polygon-packed levels (each taking place inside a sprawling multi-level castle complex), attacking various assailants who wish your destruction. However, there's no sword-swinging or hand-to-hand combat here; the main innovation is that your character must lay huge and deadly traps to kill all those who stand in your way. After a superbly straightforward explanation of how to lure your foe (and then dispatch them), the adventure begins in earnest; time to stalk through your fortress Doom-style, but this time with a vast array of cages, giant balls and pits at your fingertips!

You may think that Deception is of the Hexen ilk, but although the action takes place in a convincing 3D environment, this is actually an awesome action/strategy game that just oozes fun and playability. First, view your multi-level castle on your map, pinpoint your victim



CASTLE INTRUDERS MUST DIE!



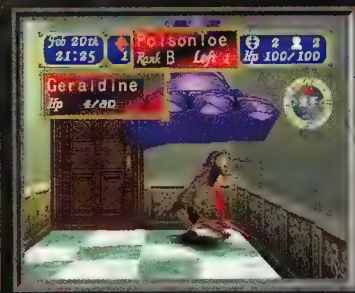
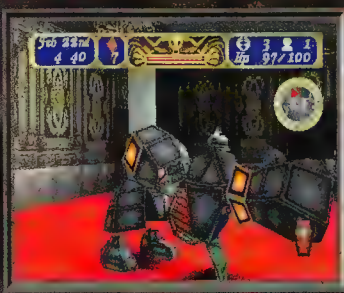
your enemy's life-force becomes spent, and providing you've lured them onto a correct trap, your victim's soul can be removed and used for a number of diabolic deeds; to increase your gold, magic points or used for monster construction!! Yes, only in this game can you take parts from different enemies and summon a werewolf, golem or red dragon to aid you in future battles (these fearsome beasts stay with you and even gain experience!). The levels increase in difficulty, the plot twists and turns and familiar characters return to haunt you (your actions also effect the endings; there are six different ones to find!). This is certainly an enthralling journey which just gets even more entertaining the further you progress.

Tecmo has succeeded in creating a new genre, a refreshing combat/strategy game in one fell swoop. I cannot praise this game enough; you play a deviously nasty

(these range from knights, mercenaries, merchants and pilgrims through to cloth dolls, magicians and even aliens - no one is to be spared!) and set your trap. This could be a pit with spikes beneath, a giant metal foot than squashes the enemy (a la Monty Python) or any number of other gruesome (and fiendishly designed) traps. You have no weapons; only your creations and nimble feet.

Once the traps are laid, you dash madly about the castle, coaxing your victims forward and hoping they blunder into a snare and fall at your scheming hands. After running into a number of traps,

POWERFUL FORCES SEEK TO DESTROY YOU!!



character who kills without remorse in an attempt to summon the Devil! Yeah, that's for me (although I'll not be chalking out pentagrams and sacrificing chickens just yet); but this is much more; good use of textured polygons, a formidable quest, different endings and loads of different killing devices. Refreshingly addictive. CH

R REVIEW



DEVELOPER - TECMO

PUBLISHER - TECMO

FORMAT - CD

OF PLAYERS - 1

DIFFICULTY - MODERATE

AVAILABLE - NOW



CHIEF HAMBLETON

HOW ABOUT A BIG 'MECH[®] WITH AN ORDER TO FRY?



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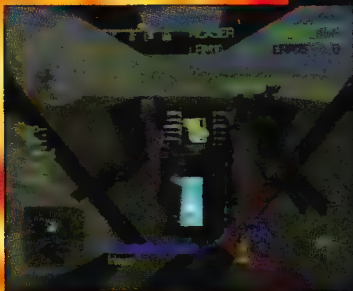
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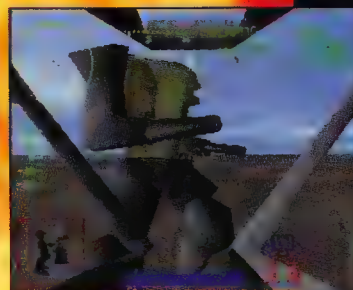
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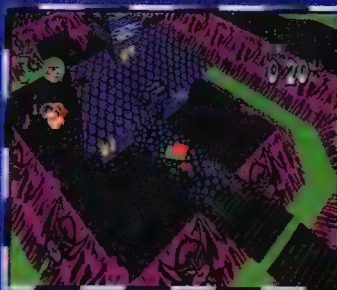
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R REVIEW



DEVELOPER - MINDSCAPE

PUBLISHER - MINDSCAPE

FORMAT - CD

OF PLAYERS - 1

DIFFICULTY - INTERMEDIATE

AVAILABLE - NOVEMBER



NICK ROX
WACKY RACERS MEETS
MICRO MACHINES!

Different is the only way to describe *Dare Devil Derby 3D*. On a system all but plagued with racing games, they have to be either fantastically good, or original enough to succeed. Luckily, *Dare Devil Derby*'s looking to be both of these.

The first thing you'll notice about the game is its cartoon-based feel and characters. With the previous games in the series based on toys (Micro Machines), it's easy to see why. If not handled correctly, the whole cartoon thing can be really lame, but developers Supersonic are old hands at taking inane concepts and crafting awesome racers with them. The gameplay is simple... come in first, or in the knock-down competition, be the last one still on the road. What isn't simple is the perspective of the action, an isometric 3/4 view rarely seen on 32-bit. This unique viewpoint does not come without problems, however: Since you can't see very far in front of you, you must make your way through the charming locales carefully. As much as you want to go veering about, you just can't, or you'll fall off the road. Also a problem is multi-player mode, in which any car that falls off the screen loses the lap entirely. These are small complaints when weighed against the sheer fun of the game, which stems mostly from the environments: In what other game can you race in a haunted house or be swallowed by a giant whale and blown out of its breathing hole?

The graphics are positively stunning, built entirely of polygons, though this may not be totally evident by looking at still screens, and meticulously detailed. Whether you're flying above farmland in a zepplin, skimming across the surface of the water in a boat or just racing, the feeling of really being in a cartoon world (er, if there is such a thing) has been represented perfectly here. The graphic engine is so amazing that it will zoom WAAY out if you enter a tunnel or to rise above a particularly high piece of scenery, such as a tower. In the incomplete version we used for this preview, however, the music just didn't fit a driving game, even one as happy as this. It was too airy and instrumental to race to, but this may change.

NR



DARE DEVIL DERBY 3D

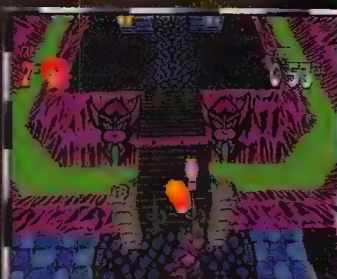
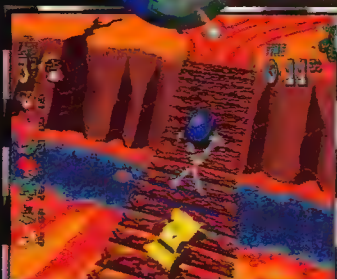
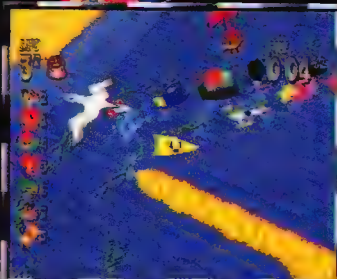
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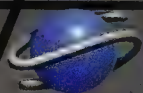


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R REVIEW



DEVELOPER - UNIVERSAL INT.

PUBLISHER - UNIVERSAL INT.

FORMAT - CD

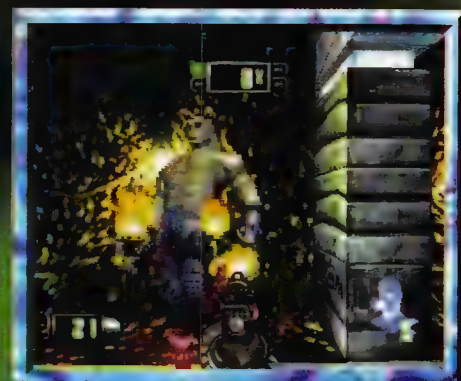
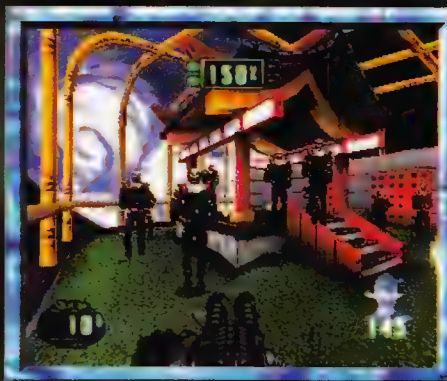
OF PLAYERS - 1

DIFFICULTY - MODERATE

AVAILABLE - NOVEMBER



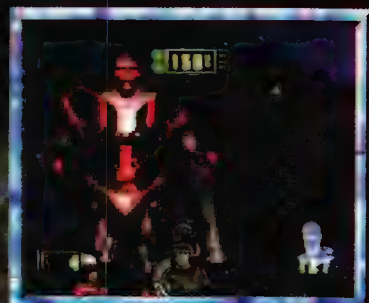
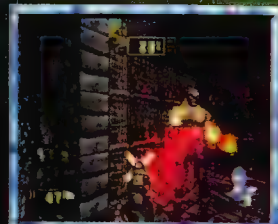
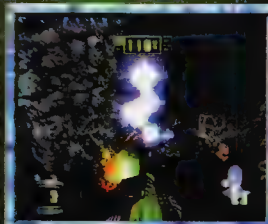
CHIEF HAMBLETON
STEP INTO THE
ACITVATOR!



As you may be able to tell, I've been plowing through these 3D corridor shoot-fests over the last couple of months (yeah, the Hambleton *Doom* Deathmatch prowess is unrivaled!), and with the arrival of *Disruptor* I had another chance to enjoy spectacular slaughter in the comfort of my own hovel. Hey, any game that can tear me away from *Turk* has to be pretty special, and *Disruptor* has a number of really cool features that make it stand out as a great title. I'll resist the temptation to wade in and compare this to every other 3D shooting game, because the developing folk over at Universal Interactive Studios have spent a load of time incorporating some unique features to add to the whole experience. Some of these additions work, and one fails miserably. Let's have a look at them, shall we?

There's 13 action-packed levels crammed into *Disruptor*. Thirteen may not sound like that many, but believe me, they're huge and full of ingenious puzzles and crammed with a load of alien beasts, mutant experimentation and power-armored soldiers with the latest in galactic weaponry. Sound like fun? You betcha, plus these enemies are intelligent, attack diligently and sometimes swamp your character (I've counted at least 20 attacking simultaneously!). If it's a full-on gunning extravaganza you're after, you're in for a treat here! These enemies also have the added bonus of being super-detailed, and although still two-dimensional, they don't pixellate that badly when up close and personal.

Those levels I mentioned earlier are also totally different; from the ice and snow of the Antarctica Lab to the downright odd Dream Sequence, every zone has separate scenery, puzzles, mission objectives and sometimes unique enemies to face. Let's put it this way; you aren't gonna finish playing *Disruptor* for a while, and you'll see something totally different on each level! Also, while I'm in my complimentary mode, I must mention the atmospheric music which is cool enough, but actually changes to a more dramatic overture when you engage your foes in combat (much like the music in *Magic Carpet*, except a lot less Arabian). This adds



DISRUPTOR



SHIELD
Surrounded by evil? Protect yourself effectively with this glowing green shield. Watch out, it lasts but a moment!



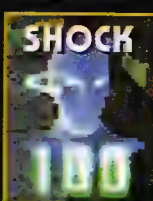
BLAST
Your foes have brains... for now. Launch this ball of energy and watch their heads fry!



HEAL
Low on health? Ferocious alien scum to gun down? Activate this and you'll receive some ethereal energy!



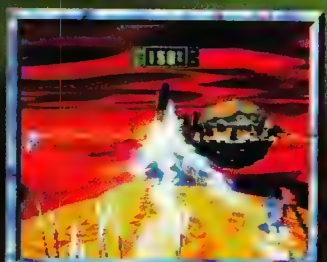
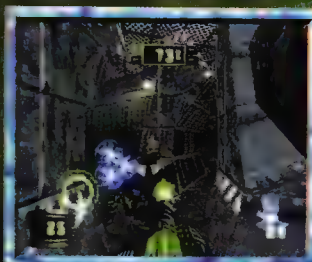
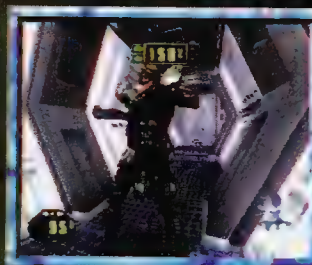
DRAIN
Perhaps most useful power; build your psi-points by launching these bolts at the enemy and collect their power!



SHOCK
That Star Trooper getting too close for comfort? Then zap him back with this psychic prod!

PSIONIC ARSENAL

Excerpts from the Hambleton Files



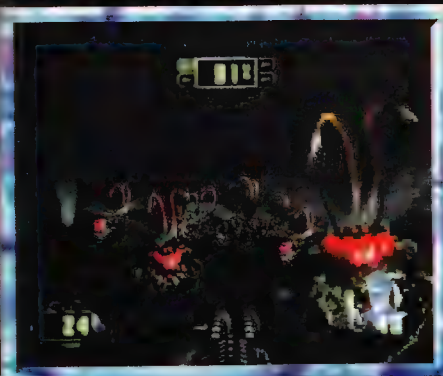


that little extra feeling of fear when you're stalking some inhuman creature down a corridor and an alien SWAT team steps in to ambush you! Finally, *Disruptor* also tries something new regarding weapons. Sure, you've got all your run-of-the-mill phasers, chain-guns and BFG look-alikes, but your character also has psychic abilities which not only look spectacular but add to the strategy ("Do I wipe this inhuman deviant out with my plasma cannon, or do I fry his brains from the inside? Hmmm...")

"So *Disruptor*'s a cool game with a decent challenge and I should run out and buy it immediately?" Well, perhaps, if you reckon you can cope with the couple of problems this game has. The most hideous of these has to be those cut scenes. Your game introduction and connecting narrative between levels is not so much poor as brain-numbingly bad. Yep, this FMV full of second-rate acting from third-rate 'thespians' fails to gel the storyline together and completely destroys the atmosphere created by the actual game itself. I was biting my knuckles down to the bone with frustrated embarrassment as I watched my all-

American hero 'buddy talk' his way through my game, walking through cardboard sets before being captured by a Dick Jones look-alike who attempted torture with a robotic egg whisk. No I'm sorry, FMV with actors is bad enough already without this Mickey Mouse attempt. If you can't do it well, then don't do it at all. Okay, I'm calm now.

The second problem isn't quite as pronounced, but still warrants attention and can badly detract from the gameplay. Say you're jogging down a passageway, swerve around a corner and face up to six alien scum, ripe for the culling. In theory, you'd unload all your mini-gun shots and then change weapons, wouldn't you? Well, in practice you use your mini-gun ammunition



up and then wait in paralyzed panic as your character fumbles about in a confused frenzy. Yes, this game loads in every weapon (the load time varying from one to five seconds depending on the situation). Note that you're weaponless the entire time; the perfect opportunity for those monsters to mince you. I've been tearing my hair out, shouting "All I need is to change weapons!! That's not so hard is it? I need my Plasma Cannon NOW!! Oops, I've been gnawed to pieces." This isn't so much unfair as damn annoying, and something the programmers should definitely have picked up on.

These two problems (along with a lack of a two player mode, not enough gore and a few unremarkable monsters) are the hindrances to an otherwise absorbing tramp into a future world of terror. I may have concentrated on the negative points, but believe me, once you skip those cut-scenes, this becomes an absorbing 3D corridor game to rival even the great *Doom* itself. Cope with the FMV and you're onto a winner here. CH



18MM SEMI



18MM AUTO

The semi and automatic are the basic weapons for your character. Watch out; you'll run out of ammo in no time!



PHASE RIFLE

Seen in all the finest sci-fi movies, this lightly burns your enemies, but takes a couple of shots to fry them...



PHASE REPEATER

A powerful laser, this rips through foes with three shots per firing. Watch for the green and fire variations!



AM REPEATER

Instead of balls of plasma, ready yourself for bolts of blue death. This cuts swathes through any enemy!



AM CYCLONE

Want even more galactic carnage? Then try one of these out; a rapid firing plasma-bolt cannon!



LOCK-ON CANNON

This extremely deadly weapon has a huge area of effect (watch yourself), and those metal balls just keep on homing in!



ZODIAC

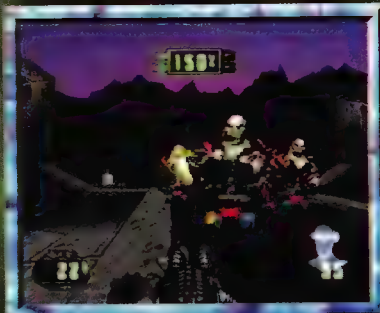
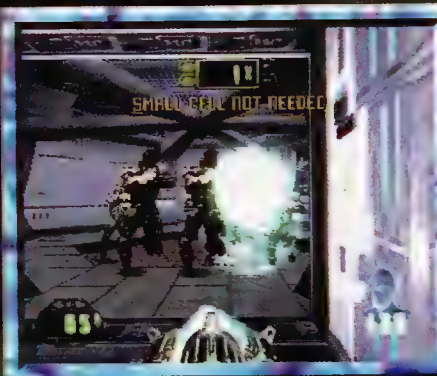
One word: BFG. This clears out hordes of aliens in seconds!



PLASMA LANCE

This piece of ordinance has one shot, turning you into a walking flame-thrower. Stride forward and burn everyone!

WEAPON ARSENAL





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CRYSTAL
DYNAMICS

ACTIVISION

SOVIET STRIKE



R
REVIEW



DEVELOPER - EA

PUBLISHER - EA

FORMAT - CD

OF PLAYERS - 1

DIFFICULTY - ADVANCED

AVAILABLE - NOVEMBER



KNIGHTMARE
STRIKE A BLOW FOR
FREEDOM

EA's *Strike* series (*Desert*, *Jungle* and *Urban*) are now looked back upon as classics of the 16-bit gaming era. On top of their amazing isometric visuals, the *Strikes* were among a handful of shoot-'em-ups to successfully incorporate an element of strategy into the blasting. Even though they were all essentially shoot-'em-ups, just flying around mindlessly blowing the hell out of stuff wouldn't get you very far.

You actually had

to stop and think about the best way to approach your various mission objectives. Of course, this wasn't to everyone's liking, but depending on where you stood, the *Strike* trilogy's strategy was either its best or worst aspect. Fast forward to 1996 and EA has just released

the latest in the *Strike* series: *Soviet Strike*. We've got FMV, we've got polygon graphics, we've got CD sound and a free-roving camera angle, but the name of the game is still the same... *Strike*! If you've ever played a *Strike* game you'll know what to expect: fly your Apache chopper around a height-mapped top-down landscape, fulfilling mission objectives and abusing the enemy with the kind of hi-tech weaponry that really shouldn't be legal. Sound familiar? Well, it is. In fact, with a few exceptions, the basic gameplay is almost identical to previous *Strike* games. Hey, if it ain't broke, don't fix it!

The story is familiar: you play an elite chopper pilot who works for a covert operations squad posted in Eastern Europe. You're an 'invisible' weapon, part of a lethal strike team called in to 'stop wars before they happen' and make sure the cold war stays in the fridge. The *Strike* games have always contained a strong story element, but this time EA has really gone to town, with high quality FMV sequences straight out of *Mission Impossible*. While these may not make the game play any better, they certainly contribute towards creating a legitimate sense of immersion, like being in your own action/espionage film. What's more, this

LOAD UP YOUR GUNSHIP WITH KILLING ORDINANCE!

POLISH YOUR MACHINE-GUN TURRETS!



sense of theatricality has been carried over into the actual game environment. For example, on the first level you receive a tele-message from your co-pilot that he's caught in a P.O.W. camp and is about to be shot. Get there in time and you'll actually see him being marched to the firing squad by two enemy troops! Save him, and later on you can drop him off next to a Snow Plow which he uses to bulldoze through an enemy encampment. This adds a lot of replay value to the game, as you can complete levels without even seeing half of the specially planned events that go on around you.

The enemy AI has also been improved. Tanks and soldiers act much more intelligently than in previous *Strike* games, not to mention realistically. I was amazed the first time I shot at a building only to see its occupant come running out, get in a truck and drive off down the road before swerving and crashing!

The graphics are first-rate. EA has made a big noise about their CD-sourced, texture-mapped terrain, and with good reason – it looks amazing! Also, all of the objects (vehicles, buildings, etc.) have been fully modeled as 3D polygon objects, and to show this off there is a new 'chase' camera mode that actually moves the landscape around your chopper (the 'classic' isometric camera mode is optional). The light sourced debris-ridden explosions are also very impressive.

Unfortunately, there is a downside to this graphical overload: the frame-rate. The basic frame-rate is quite jerky, and when there's a lot going on, the frame rate drops right down to a crawl. You do kinda get used to it, but it effects the gameplay nonetheless. The sound is also a mixed bag, with nice interactive music but muffled effects. The explosions and gunfire just aren't sharp enough for my liking. I do love the humorous speech of the enemy soldiers, though: "Ha ha ha, not close...urgh!" or "First aid! Second aid!"

The gameplay is classic *Strike* – a perfect balance of strategy and action. Everything you learned from the 16-bit *Strike* games will help you



here: avoid alert zones, destroy buildings for bonuses, stay clear of the more powerful enemy, rescue POWs and MIAs to replenish your armor, and blow the living crap out of everything from cattle to castles. Even though there are only five levels (Crimea, Black Sea, Caspian, Dracula and Kremlin) their size and complexity guarantees that this is one game you won't be finishing in a hurry.

Unfortunately, the same flaws that applied to all the other *Strike* games apply here. It can take you over an hour to finish a level, and if you die it's back to the beginning, meaning you have to replay the same missions all over again. This would be fine if you didn't die that often, but *Soviet Strike* is the most difficult *Strike* game yet. Enemy fire can rip you to shreds in a second, and because most enemies have an attack range bigger than the screen (and there's no on-screen radar) it's hard to see it coming. What's more, the only way you can replenish your armor is to rescue MIAs (rare) or find an armor refill crate (even rarer). The game gets too difficult too quickly, and while veteran *Strikers* may appreciate the challenge, newcomers may find it a bit frustrating.

Other than that, *Soviet Strike* is everything you could wish for from a 32bit *Strike*. It looks incredible, sounds good, plays brilliantly, and exercises both your trigger finger and gray matter. But if you find yourself pulling your hair out after a few hours' play, don't say I didn't warn you. **K**

HOSTILE ENEMIES HAVE BEEN LOCATED!



PERFECT WEAPON



Blake Hunter is Earth Command Defense Force's top agent and ace martial artist. He's also the star of ASC's most ambitious game to date - *Perfect Weapon*. Transported into a strange dimension for unknown reasons, Hunter must fight through five unique lands, mixing adventure and fighting elements together, to find his destiny.

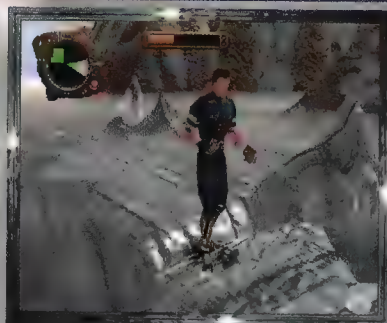
Perfect Weapon is a polygonal, pre-rendered adventure game. Most games like this (*Resident Evil*, *Alone in the Dark*, etc.) show you one pre-rendered background, then load in another one once you've reached the limits of the first, and so on. *Perfect Weapon*, however, has another background ready for you instantly. You'll even get up to four views of the same spot, right away, just by walking into a different part of the background (see box, top of facing page). Gamers rejoice! *PW* has over 1300 of these gorgeous rendered backgrounds, and the levels only ever need to load once!

How do all these views and backgrounds mix with the gameplay? Well, let's say you're moving your character across a dangerous ice bridge in the first level (or "Moon" as they're called in *PW*). The current background, as far as you can see, ends at a point where you've gotta jump across a pit to another platform. On your way, the view will change to beside you, behind you, and finally to an ideal view that lets you judge where and when to jump. Similarly, across the next four Moons (Garden, Forest, Desert, and Proteus), ideal views have been set-up throughout the different backgrounds to help the player see as much as possible. The incredible number of views and backgrounds compliment the huge environments of each Moon. The Forest Moon, for example, starts you off on the ground, and finally reaches its climax high atop the branches within a giant network of treehouses.

The gameplay consists of two modes: Exploration and Combat. Exploration is just the mode you're using to walk around, so you can only jump and run using R1 and double tapping up, respectively. When you're attacked, Combat mode kicks in, and Left and Right punches and kicks are possible with the controller buttons. At any time you can check out your map and use items, but combat will continue (so watch yourself!). The



BLAKE HUNTER
THE WORLD'S TOP MARTIAL ARTS
EXPERT, AND SPECIAL AGENT OF THE
EARTH COMMAND DEFENSE FORCE





SACRA JA
OVERSEER OF THE DESERT MOON, AND
MASTER OF MONKEY KUNG FU



RENZA-FU
VENIZEN OF THE CALLISTO FOREST MOON,
AND MASTER OF THE ART OF SAPOEIRA



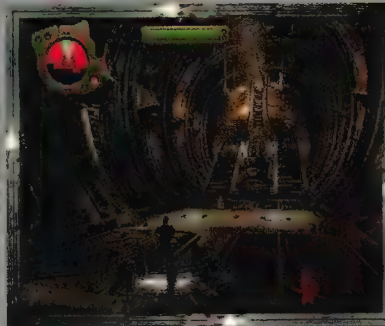
SPHENODON
EXPERT AT SNAKE STYLE KUNG FU
AND RESIDENT OF PROTEUS MOON



TORAN
TRAINED PURELY AS A THUG, TO WEED OUT
USELESS KIDNAPPED COMBATANTS



3 DIFFERENT VIEWS IN AS MANY STEPS!!!
(TWELVE STEPS, ACTUALLY, BUT YOU GET THE POINT!)



fighting has been modeled after *Tekken 2*, with similar button sequences for combos (by combining your punches, kicks etc.), throws and counters, and various crouching and jumping attacks (almost 100 moves total). Practice your fighting, 'cause every Moon has restless natives, each with their own fighting style, and they're more than willing to gang up on you. For example, the Monks of the oriental Garden Moon will attack with Shaolin Kung Fu techniques (quick punches, reflexive kicks, even teleports!), while the war-prone Panthera of the Forest Moon attack using primal, lightning fast Capoeira. Fighting takes center stage in most levels, but with Transmitters (to disable barriers), Health increases, Keys, Armor, and half a dozen more health and combat-related items, you'll still find time to search the vast levels for secrets and power-ups.

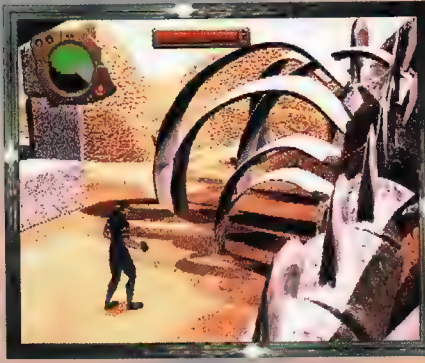
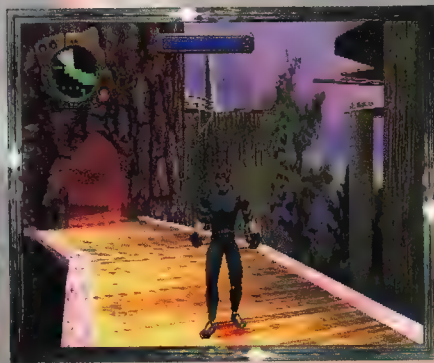
Every character is motion-captured, beautifully animated, and light sourced. And thanks to ASC's

Behavioral Artificial Intelligence system, the enemies have hauntingly realistic movement and reactions. Through imaginative design, glorious artwork, and ambient music, the Moons exude an almost palpable atmosphere and character - keeping you enthralled and anxious as you play. I guess it's the combination of so much cool artwork, all comin' at you at once, that makes each and every level so deep and satisfying.

I'm the type of person who plays any game that comes along if it's good. And I'm playing *Perfect Weapon* and liking it a lot. Sure, I can appreciate it for boldly mixing a dedicated fighting engine into an adventure game, and having great graphics, and not loading (deep breath), but I'm playing it 'cause it's fun. There's a lot of really good gameplay, rock solid play-mechanics, and it's long (the longest pre-rendered adventure game of this type). Just get your hands on a copy and enjoy. G



SHIRO
KNOWN AS THE "ENLIGHTENED ONE"
AND MASTER OF SHAOLIN KUNG FU



R
REVIEW



DEVELOPER - ASC

PUBLISHER - ASC

FORMAT - CD

OF PLAYERS - 1

DIFFICULTY - ADVANCED

AVAILABLE - NOW



GLITCH



VIDEO GAME



with hyper-amplified sound & graphics

hyper-amplified

21 watts
740 mi
aimed right
your



1

stereo surround sound
and built-in sub woofer

>> power >>



2

enhanced video graphics

graphics

multiple



(3)

play

(play it

Fastest 400 watt hook-ups

video
game
tv

NANOTEK WARRIOR

R
REVIEW



DEVELOPER - TETRAGON

PUBLISHER - VIRGIN

FORMAT - CD

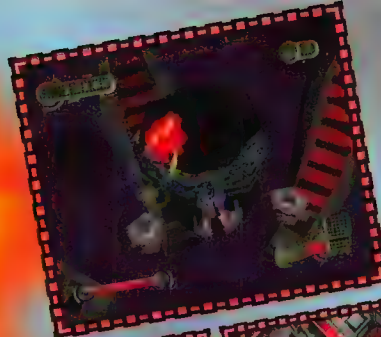
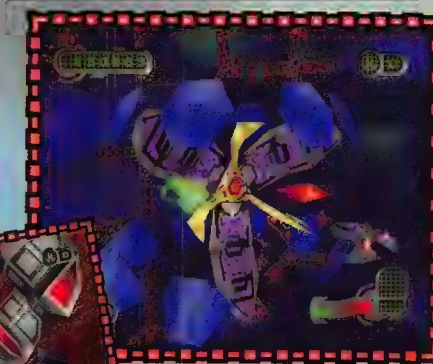
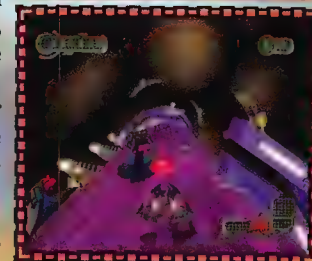
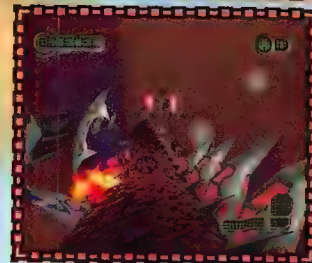
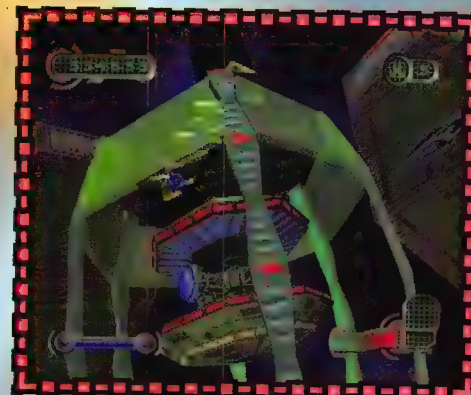
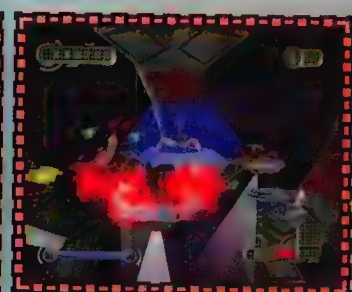
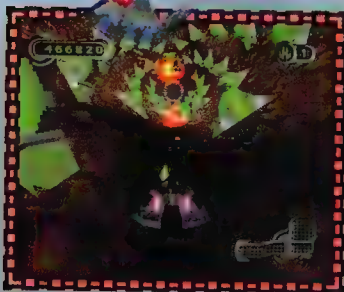
OF PLAYERS - 1

DIFFICULTY - ADVANCED

AVAILABLE - NOVEMBER



**KNIGHTMARE
NANO-NANO**



In case you hadn't gathered from the screen shots, *Nanotek Warrior* is a 3D 'into-the-screen' scrolling shoot-'em-up with a twist. Literally. The play field is a scrolling 360-degree rotational cylinder along which your craft travels: moving left and right actually twists the cylinder around you. I suppose the best way to describe it is as a cross between *Tempest 2000* and *Zaxxon*. Your craft can shoot (doh!), angle across the screen, jump, and even twist sideways (for narrow getaways). You can also pick up some cool extra primary and secondary weapon power-ups, as well as extra lives and energy. And believe me when I say you're gonna need them, cuz *Nanotek Warrior* is a real bitch!

The *Tempest 2000* aspect comes from the rotational play field. While for the most part you stay outside the cylinder, at times you actually travel inside the 'Nano-tunnel,' and it's here where the game most resembles Atari's classic (still one of the best shooters around). The *Zaxxon* influence is apparent in the nature of the obstacles that must be avoided. While initially these take the form of basic towers and low level blocks that must be jumped, later on they get more complex and lot tougher. It's not just a case of high or low. You have to time your jumps to pass through mid-height obstacles, or gauge your speed to dodge between giant spinning propeller blades.

Nanotek Warrior looks great. Developers Tetragon have given the game a very distinctive look; like a texture-mapped *Tempest 2000*. Because most of the obstacles and enemies are simple shape formations, they've been able to keep the frame rate up (60 fps), and really go to town on the effects. Expect plenty of gouraud shading, translucent force fields, light-sourced weapons and explosions. There's also minimal pop-up, with only the occasional noticeable clipping when the cylinder starts bending. The music is also pretty cool: a thumping Dolby Surround techno soundtrack that's not as good as *Tempest 2000*, but still boasts some cool tunes of its own.

If there's some rain on this parade it's the difficulty level. Go to the options screen and you get the choice of normal or hard; no easy! And even on the normal setting it starts tough and then goes through the roof. By about level five things are getting pretty silly. The trouble is that on the later levels the only way to survive is to memorize large portions of the cylinder. If you can deal with that, and you like fast-paced 3D shooters, then you're going to love *Nanotek Warrior*. Personally, while I can enjoy it in short doses, it's not really my cup of tea. But shooting fans who crave a challenge would be wise to check it out.

K

Proof That Demons Do Exist

In the near future, mankind has conquered dimensional travel but the door we have opened swings both ways. The peaceful city you have grown up in has become a haven for dark creatures from another world— Demons! Now it's up to you and your friends to harness the hidden power within you by entering the fantasy game known as Persona.

You awaken with incredible abilities that you will need to defeat the scores of Demon invaders and cleanse the land of their forces. Converse with them before doing battle to determine your best course of action. Fight them or enlist their aid in your mission. Either way, you are set for the fantasy adventure of a lifetime!

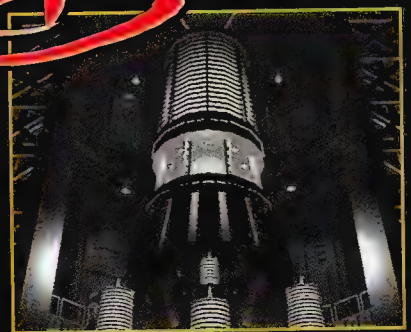
Special Features

- Based on the ultra-popular, mega-hit, Megami Tensei series: first time to hit US shores
- 100+ hours of pulse pounding gameplay
- Over 300 different monsters to do battle with
- Morph any member of your party into a more powerful source known as "Persona"
- Fight your way to one of many endings

Persona



Use your "Persona"



<http://www.atlus.com>
ATLUS

RATING PENDING
RP
CONTENT RATED BY
ESRB

Persona™ is the first chapter of the
REVELATIONS

RPG

PlayStation

P PREVIEW



DEVELOPER - SINGLETRAC

PUBLISHER - SONY

FORMAT - CD

OF PLAYERS - 1-2

DIFFICULTY - ADJUSTABLE

AVAILABLE - NOVEMBER



CHIEF HAMBLETON
You're twistin' my melons, man!



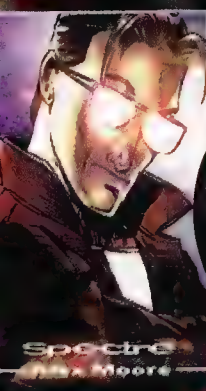
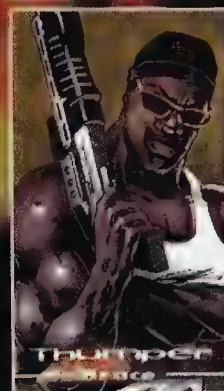
There's a smell of napalm in the air, you've oiled your throbbing motor, loaded up your hood-mounted dual machine guns and you're maniacally swerving through the broken ruins of downtown Los Angeles on a mission to kill. Yes, certain areas of present day LA certainly aren't a picnic in the woods, but in the future the situation is even more grim... this is the world of *Twisted Metal 2*, where only the most insane and bloodthirsty drivers survive. You've gotta lool up with your motor of choice, take to a number of arenas and gun down up to six other opponents, just like in the first game. Are you ready for more car carnage in some seriously dangerous texture-mapped polygon zones?

Twisted Metal 2 is almost here; we secured a 70% complete copy for our perusal, and after some serious car combat, I can tell you that same adrenaline rush of hammering away at a fleeing vehicle is still there... except this time there's so much more of everything. This is *Twisted Metal 2*, baby, and the combat zones are much more extensive; you've got the whole planet to choose from! Yep, they've gone one better and incorporated a load of new venues throughout the world; so now your ramming and destruction can take place in a concrete bowl just outside Moscow, a field in Holland (complete with collapsing windmills!) and even along the rooftops of New York at night (watch your acceler-





STOP



ating; that's a long, long drop!).

The venues have changed, and there's certainly more extensive courseways to powerslide your way through (eight huge zones for starters), all of which incorporate freeways, underpasses, bumps, hills and other obstacles to make your action as fraught as possible. This time, these killing fields are a lot more expansive, meaning a load more cars to burn, more scope for tactical and exploratory gameplay, but the zones are never too large to hinder your progress; this never turns from a hunt and destroy mission into a needless wander fest. Plus, you're sure to have a load of fun hunting down your opponent through the streets of Hong Kong or even up the Eiffel Tower!

The playfields are huge, with more detailed polygon walls, floors and scenic details (much of which you can destroy); but what about those all-important characters? Well, *TM2* doesn't disappoint here either, with a dozen crazed psychos clambering into their favorite killing machine; ready to run down their opponents and back over their corpses! There's some old faces and newcomers to view, and each competitor has their own set of strengths and weaknesses (Mr. Grimm for example, may ride a Harley from Hell and have a turn circle tighter than a Fiat, but a couple of napalm blasts

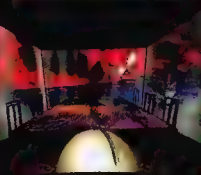
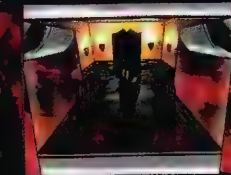
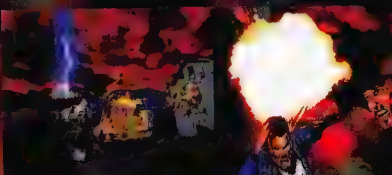
and he'll be burning up the road (in more ways than one) just like anyone else!); so a slightly more tactical approach to foe disposal is in order this time around, and there's even level bosses to watch for.

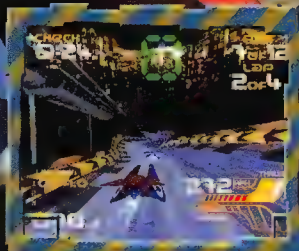
As you'll already know, the emphasis in *Twisted Metal* has always been on the fun side of car combat, and this time the game is shaping up excellently; having loads of options to add even more excitement to your battles! There's Tournament mode where six competitors await to blast you apart; take 'em all out and you move on to the next zone! Alternatively, you may wish to practice one of the tracks, in which case Competition mode is for you; choose your zone and up to six opponents, track 'em down and turn 'em into scrap metal! For those gamers with a social life; there's even a two player option (link up or split screen) where you can face off in a duel of death, or complete the game in co-operation mode (like *Doom*). You want longevity? You've got it with this title!

Twisted Metal 2 is sure to be popular when it finally gets a release, and providing those developers tidy up the problems of warping and glitching polygons (horribly evident in many of the levels), then I'll have no hesitation in recommending this release to all those who crave more vehicular butchery after the fun of the first *Twisted Metal*. Stay on course, we'll be back with a review as soon as I've taken down that blasted Sweet Tooth! **CH**



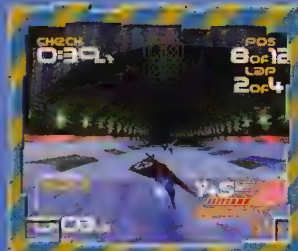
Smash your opponent in a no-holds-barred war, or go competitive and help smash all combatants!!





The Psygnosis gaming gods are back!! PlayStation owners craving futuristic sled carnage (that would be most of us, wouldn't it?) have no need to fear, for some of the UK's finest developers are back with the sequel to the biggest sleeper hit of last year. But how do you improve on a game with already sleek looks, great gameplay and an incredible sensation of speed? You make it bigger, faster, brighter and even more fun to play; that's what you do! A fine premise, but has it worked?

For the vast majority of the gameplay, the answer is a resounding



WIPEOUT XL

R
REVIEW



DEVELOPER - PSYGNOSIS

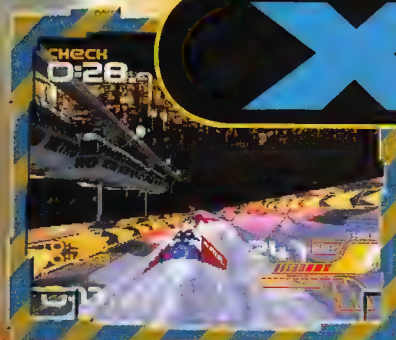
PUBLISHER - PSYGNOSIS

FORMAT - CD

OF PLAYERS - 1-2

DIFFICULTY - EASY

AVAILABLE - NOVEMBER



yes! Anyone even remotely concerned with this title should already have checked out our expansive preview last issue, and with further playing, I can safely state that *Wipeout XL* is the fastest racer on any console platform. A pretty sweeping statement, but when you've clambered down from your prototype Chinese sled, mopped the sweat from your brow and palms and engaged Piranha mode, you'll soon understand why this statement rings true.

This may start off as a slower but prettier version of the original, but once you've mastered the arts of the different difficulty levels (each revealing more hidden tracks), you'll soon be violently twisting your spasming craft around the fiendish courses in a frenzy of joypad wrestling. Then of course, when

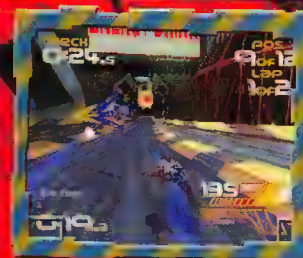
THIS NEWLY DEVELOPED **RACING** TECHNOLOGY
IS **FASTER** THAN ANYTHING SEEN BEFORE...

the secret Chinese craft is revealed (think; Devil Car without wheels and on steroids), you'll actually fear the speed of the game...

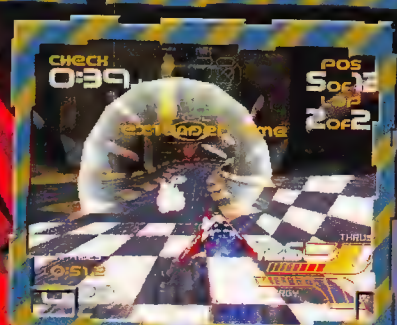
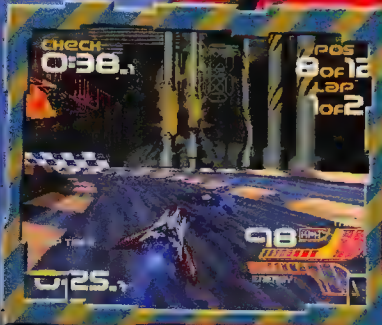
Gameplay is exactly the same as the original (i.e. zip around the course three times, trouncing your foes with a barrage of hi-tech weaponry), but a couple of refinements make this much easier and a lot more playable this time around. The most important

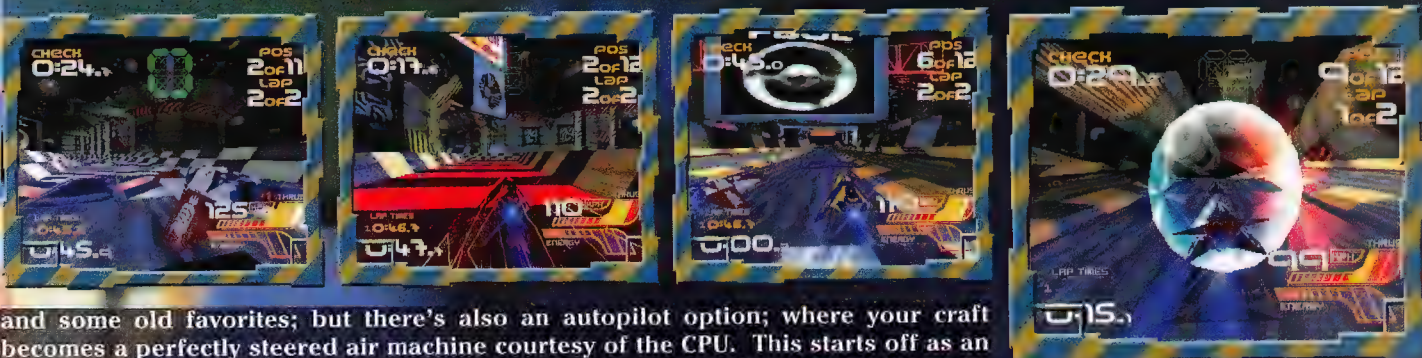
gameplay tweak is the way the craft handles hitting the sides of the tracks. Now, instead of thudding into the barriers and jolting to a halt, your sled scrapes along (allowing you to steer out of danger), giving you not only an increased adrenaline rush, but also a feeling of intense speed that was missing from the original. This is the way you'd expect sled racing to be; supremely fast and awesomely playable!

The additions don't end there either; there's a huge array of weapons to aim at your enemy (all of which were detailed last issue), some of them new



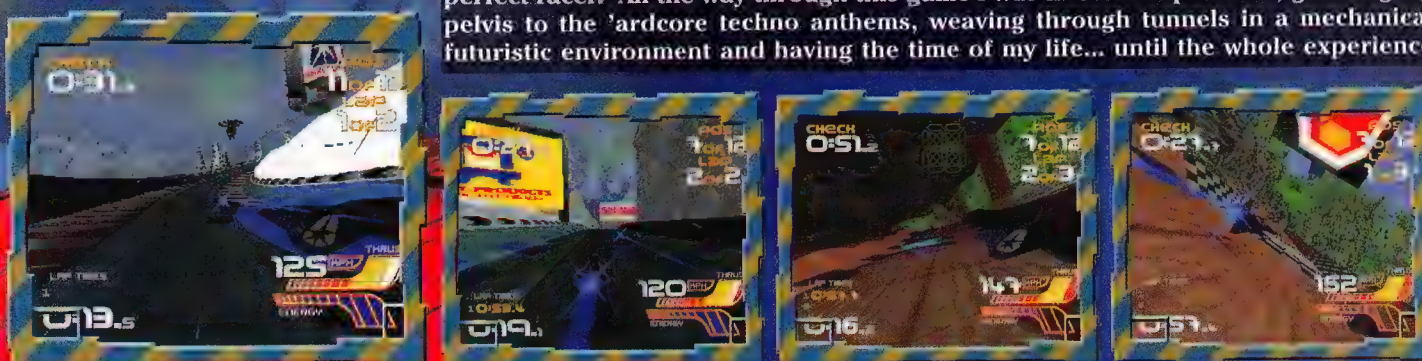
CHIEF HAMBLETON
THE JUMPING FLASH
OF RACING GAMES;
AWESOME TO PLAY,
BUT OVER IN
TWO DAYS.



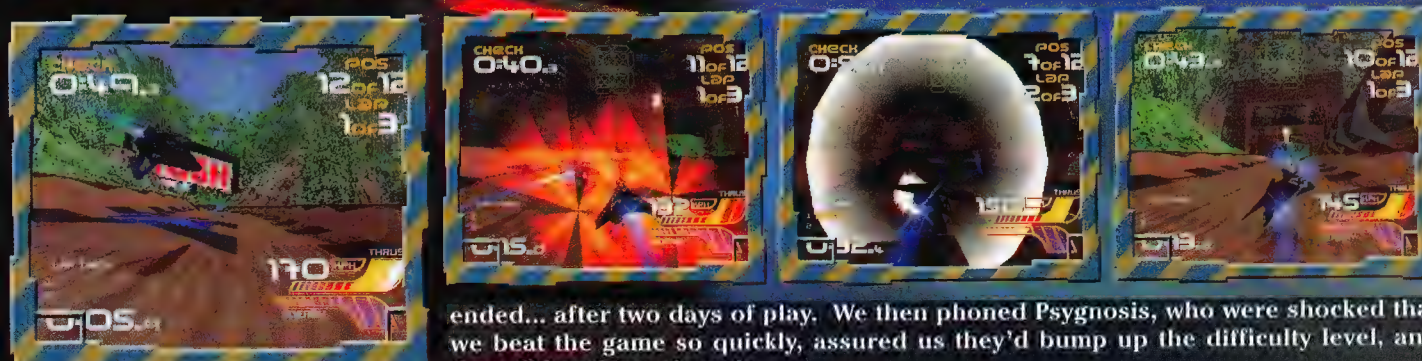


and some old favorites; but there's also an autopilot option; where your craft becomes a perfectly steered air machine courtesy of the CPU. This starts off as an annoying feature until you realize the whole race can depend on the implementation of this device. You could be approaching that final impossible bend at warp speed, and simply pressing the autopilot allows your craft to turn impossible turns to speed to victory. Use this wisely and you've grasped a large part of the gameplay. Forget this feature and you'll be floundering for weeks.

The speed and weapons are excellent, the texture maps fantastic (the most impressive so far seen on the Sony machine) and the fluidity second-to-none. Add the cream of UK dance bands to this cocktail and you've got an almost perfect racer. All the way through this game I was in ecstatic pleasure, grinding my pelvis to the 'ardcore techno anthems, weaving through tunnels in a mechanical futuristic environment and having the time of my life... until the whole experience



PIRANHA TECHNOLOGY SACRIFICES WEAPONS FOR SUPERIOR SPEED AND DEFENSIVE SYSTEMS



While you're playing, you'll be in heaven, gasping at the jumps and gaping at the scenery, but the whole experience was over far too soon. Remember how you took months to complete the first game? Well, those who consider themselves racing experts should have this licked in two days, and after the Piranha class and the Chinese super craft there's nothing left to do except go head-to-head with another player. A real pity really, because with more tracks (and the ability to race them backwards; a glaring oversight), this would have been perfect (and I mean 100% perfect). As it stands, *Wipeout XL* will be remembered as the *Jumping Flash!* of racing games (looks stunning, but a walkover). Perhaps Psygnosis should have a word with their playtesters in the future...

CH



P PREVIEW



DEVELOPER - ATLUS

PUBLISHER - ATLUS

FORMAT - CD

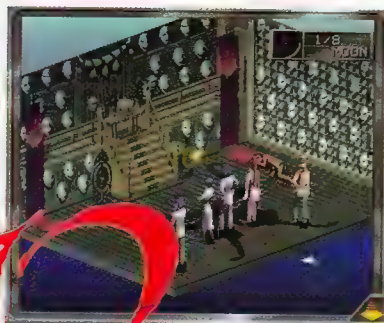
OF PLAYERS - 1

DIFFICULTY - ADVANCED

AVAILABLE - DECEMBER



TAKUMI



Persona

Don't I feel like quite the fool, ranting for hours about how *Suikoden's* the only decent RPG to come out this year, and then being handed a copy of

Persona nary a few minutes later. What's up with that? Has the world gone mad? Two RPGs... On the SAME system, in the same MONTH? Not only is that crazy, it's potentially dangerous! Take me for example. The RPG-playing part of my brain, emaciated from a year long lack of nourishment, is currently spasming out of controFSh98ydfskf...ERK... Ah. It just stopped. Hmm. Apparently I



can no longer see out of my left eye. Ah, whatever. Back to *Persona*.

Actually, *Suikoden* and *Persona* are very different games. *Persona* is the latest chapter of Atlus' cash cow *Megami Tensei* series (to be called the *Revelations* series in the US), a series Namco began on the Famicom, that's spawned (at my estimate) some 300,000 different games. At first, they were *Wizardry* clones in a demonic sci-fi setting, but the series has been evolving rapidly. This, as well as *Saturn Devil Summoner*, are the latest in this vary intricate, very mature series.

Vastly different from *Suikoden's* fantasy setting, your

heroes are nothing more glamorous than a restless pack of 2nd year students at a modern day Japanese private school. The game's massive setting is their realistically rendered town, and the "dungeons" include the school, police station, local corporations, and the town's shopping mall. Although "devil-summoning" is still a key element of the plot, this element is no where near as strongly realized as it was in *Devil Summoner*; defusing that contro-

versy is probably one of the reasons that Atlus is releasing *Persona* first.

MegaTen— sorry, *Revelations* games are incredibly complex. There are so many elements, options and locations in *Persona* that my few hours of play time have barely scratched the surface. Still, I definitely like what I see. The 3D graphics are slick as always, the polygon town (complete with polygon cars obeying polygon driving laws) is especially slick, and the new battle system is very well done. The soundtrack is of good quality, and incredibly varied, and the vocal effects in the battles (especially those from the monsters) are nothing if not memorable.

More importantly, the storyline is great. I really liked *Devil Summoner's* storyline, but with only 3 major characters, there wasn't too much going on in the character building department. *Persona* sports a much larger cast, and the characters all have well-defined and enjoyable personalities.

We'll be back with much more on *Persona* in the near future, but even at this early stage I can firmly say that RPG fans have a second reason to cherish their PlayStations.

Persona bears little resemblance to the RPGs we're used to seeing in the States. The game has three distinct perspectives: A free-floating, overhead polygon town, isometric hand-drawn rooms and battles, and hand-drawn first-person dungeons, a la *Phantasy Star*.

Although *Persona's* storyline is exceptionally well-developed, the game's main emphasis is firmly rooted in its battle system. The battles might be a bit too frequent for some players' tastes, but the amount of options present in the battle system is without precedent.



Each character can equip both a normal weapon, and a gun for long range attacks. In addition to standard block and attack options (and a convenient macro that does such things for you), you have a couple of other interesting options. One is to use the "Persona" magics, a command in which you summon a god-like manifestation of your own true inner nature, and use his or her powers to attack the enemies or help your party.

Another new twist is the "Contact" menu. Although you can no longer coerce enemies into joining your party (which was a major part of *Devil Summoner*), negotiations with them remain an

important part of the game. Each character in your party has four different contact commands, everything from taunting, scolding or mocking your foes to seducing them, dancing for them, or singing to them. A wise negotiator can use his skills to scare off potential enemies, get information from them, and even extort items and money from them. A poor negotiator runs the risk of making them even more violent.

In addition to all that, there's an entire shopping mall filled with stores selling the game's hundreds of weapons and items, casinos offering eight cool bonus games, and a mysterious mage who can help you learn the game's vast array of *Persona* spells, as well as create summonable monster hybrids.

Complex, yes, but definitely worthy of your mental energy. RPGs may be coming less frequently, but after playing this and *Suikoden* in one month, it couldn't be more clear that, yes, they're finally growing up...

Personas



Three Different Perspectives





DYNAMITE PASS



HARDCORE 4X4



GROUND ZERO GULCH



MERCURIAL FOREST



HADES' HIGHWAY

P
PREVIEW



DEVELOPER - ASC

PUBLISHER - ASC

FORMAT - CD

OF PLAYERS - 1-2

DIFFICULTY - N/A

AVAILABLE - NOVEMBER



KNIGHTMARE



DEVIL'S KITCHEN



Stock up on gas, strap in tight and make sure you've brought the spare, 'cuz ASC is set to bring you the roughest, toughest, downright dirtiest racing experience ever! Some driving games, like *FL*, are made as simulators - attempts to accurately recreate the sensation and physics of driving in an electronic medium. Others, like *Destruction Derby*, are made just for fun. *Hardcore 4X4* definitely falls into the latter category.

Hardcore 4X4 isn't like an ordinary driving game. Sure, you still race a number of other vehicles around a track in the hope of coming first, but that's not what separates it from the crowd. I guess the best way to describe it would be a cross between *Sega Rally* and *Destruction Derby*, but that's not entirely accurate. You see, *Hardcore 4X4* does things a little differently...

The vehicle handling is such that the moment you pick up the pad you can play the game. There's no mastering of high speed power slides or cornering here. All of the trucks are incredibly responsive, and getting used to their control is a relatively easy task. What's more, the course layout is remarkably easy to follow, with no really tight corners or tricky chicanes. It's all pretty straightforward from the word go. But that's

where the fun begins. You see, *Hardcore 4X4*'s motto seems to be: roads are for wimps. You may be racing four other trucks, but they're not the real enemy. The track (or rather the lack of it) is.

The courses in *Hardcore 4X4* are the most inhospitable hell-holes on this planet, with names like Dynamite Pass and Devil's Kitchen. Most people wouldn't even think about taking a walk around these places, never mind drive a truck! A mountain pass with sheer cliffs at every turn, a forest track with rocks



in your path and the top of a volcano with red dust and lava pools are just three of the six tracks on offer. And on each one the terrain is about as flat as Pamela Lee. It's a constant battle to keep your truck upright and on the track, and as you pick up speed and hit hills you really start flying all over the place. Play from the 'inside the truck' view and I guarantee you'll be screaming in no time!

The version we have is a beta and there's still some stuff that needs works. The CPU AI is inconsistent, the track layouts are all a bit too similar and there's no link-up mode. Hopefully these will be fixed in time for the review next issue. Get ready to get dirty! **CH**

MachineHead

R
REVIEW



DEVELOPER - CORE

PUBLISHER - EIDOS

FORMAT - CD

OF PLAYERS - 1

DIFFICULTY - INTERMEDIATE

AVAILABLE - NOVEMBER



KNIGHTMARE

You should know right off the bat that I am a BIG fan of first person perspective shooters.

From *Final Doom* to *PowerSlave*, from *Hexen* to *Turok* - they are my calling. I love them and they love me. The day *Quake* comes out on the N64 is the day my social life ends. But until then, I'll always have games like *Machinehead* to tide me over.

Machinehead is the latest in a long line of P.O.V. vehicle shooters from UK developers Core (remember *Battle Corps* and *Thunderstrike*) who could be considered as something of an expert in this genre. Correction. Make that: they OWN the genre. However, *Machinehead* is something of a departure from their usual combat/strategy/simulation approach. Despite having the control mechanics and inertia of a ground based vehicle, *Machinehead* is more *Doom* than *Shell Shock*, with the emphasis placed firmly on close range action. Definitely a good thing, if you ask me. *Machinehead's* plot and cinematics are actually pretty cool, in a cheesy B-movie kinda way. You play

JUMP ON YOUR BIKE OF DESTRUCTION AND LET IT GO!

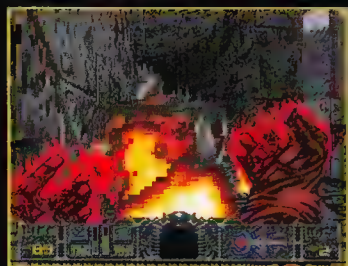
the part of Dr. Kimberly Stride, a buxom scientist unwittingly chained to a mobile bomb (the Vorpul Blade) created to stop the spread of a deadly Nano-virus called the Machinehead. The only way the virus can be neutralized is to pilot the bomb across infected terrain and into the virus' heart: the Machinehead Core.

What that means in game terms is a 16 level P.O.V. shooter with ultra-smooth, ultra-solid polygon graphics for both the environment and enemies (a

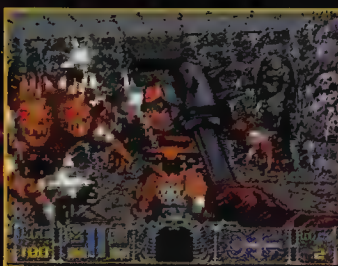
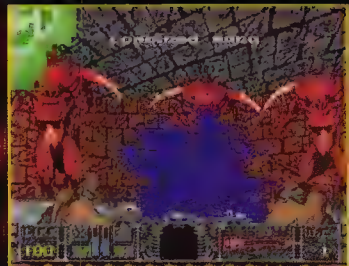
la *Quake* on the PC), a brilliant hardcore techno/ambient soundtrack, amazing graphical effects, awesome weapons and nightmarish enemies. Controlling the Vorpul Blade is tricky to begin with, but once you've found a button configuration you're happy with it becomes second nature. I particularly like the way you can use the D-pad to look in any direction and the buttons to actually move, similar to mouse aiming on the PC. The weapons are all balanced and satisfying to use, while enemies get bigger and badder the further you go into the game, ranging from robotic spiders to giant battle-mechs!

The only real criticism I can make of *Machinehead* is that the visibility is very poor. Things fade in and out of sight very smoothly, but because this happens so close to you it only generates the effect of darkness. This is a clever way of getting around pop-up, but unfortunately it affects the entire look of the game, reducing the impact of the otherwise impressive graphics. I can only wonder what an N64 *Machinehead* with a infinite horizon (a la *Pilotwings*) would have looked like. How about it, Core?

Despite this flaw, *Machinehead* is a quality product. The vehicle control adds a new spin on a well-worn genre, and while it's not as good as *Doom* or *PowerSlave*, it's definitely a good buy for 'corridor' junkies like myself. **K**

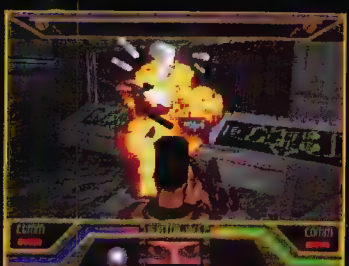
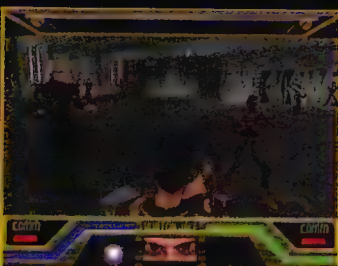


Hexen is the fantasy themed sequel to *Doom* that was a monster hit on the PC a year ago, and is now PlayStation bound. Set in the magically enhanced kingdom of Hexen, you play one of three different characters on a quest to defeat the evil Serpent Rider Korax. The game uses an enhanced version of the *Doom* graphics engine that allows you to look up and down, jump, backtrack on previously conquered levels or even fly. Each character has different weapons and physical attributes (making for varied Deathmatch battles) and the levels have been designed to actually look like real environments.



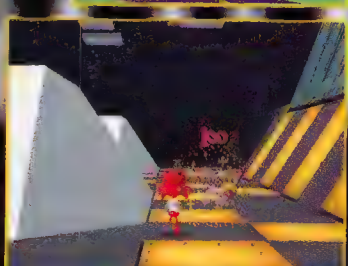
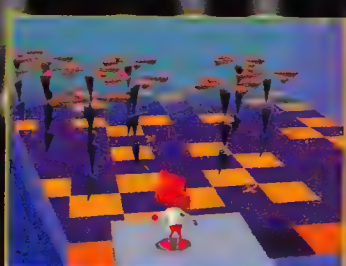
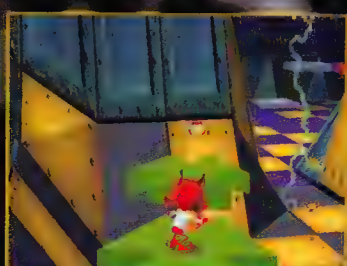
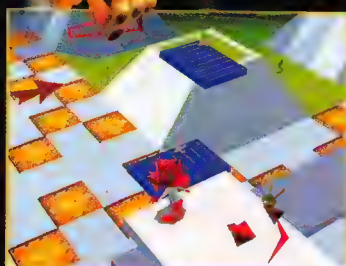
BROKEN HELIX

Broken Helix is a first person shooter with a difference: this one's actually got an interactive plot. You are bomb disposal expert Jake Burton sent into a secret bunker in Area 51 to find and defuse two bombs. But that's just the start of your problems. The basic gameplay is similar to *Doom* but here you can actually see your character on screen. You can also interact with other characters to obtain information and forward the story. There's a lot of speech in the game, including a brilliant Schwarzenegger parody, but best of all, the main character is voiced by none other than **BRUCE CAMPBELL** of *Evil Dead* fame! Groovy!



Bubsy 3D arrived nearly Purrfected just before the close of the issue. The game has come a long way since we last previewed it, and after just a few minutes of play we decided unanimously to give it ample space in the January issue as well as coverage in MegaFan where we'll be able to show you all of this huge exploration 3D platform craziness. *B3D* still takes some getting used to in terms of control but the hi-res graphics and huge environments demand further investigation.

BUBSY 3D





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And completely puts all others in its category to shame. This year, that game is...



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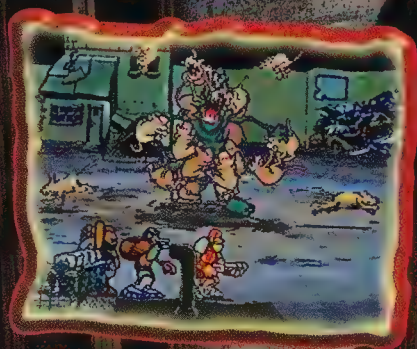
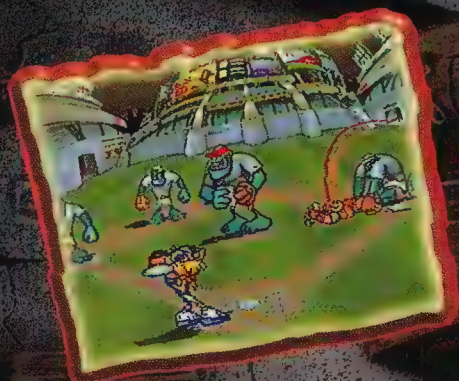
To Enter: Visit your local Electronics Boutique, WaldenSoftware or EBX store or fill out the entry form in the December issue of GameFan Magazine or in the DISRUPTOR game package. ENTRANTS MUST use the official entry form; photocopies will be disqualified. All entry forms must be completely filled out to be valid. All entries become property of Universal Interactive Studios and will not be acknowledged or returned. No taxes, federal, state and local, if any, will be the responsibility of the prize winners. Prizes are awarded to the names of the contest winners, or in the name of the parent or guardian if the winner is a minor. Prizes are cash and merchandise of similar value. No cash equivalent will be offered. All entries must be received by Universal Interactive Studios by January 31, 1997. A random drawing will be conducted on or about February 15, 1997 by Universal Interactive Studios or its designee from completed entries which are at the location as the drawing date. The decisions of the entity conducting the random drawing shall be final. All entrants, by filling out this form, grant sponsors permission to use their name and likeness for advertising and promotional purposes, with no additional compensation or acknowledgment, unless prohibited by law. Offer void where prohibited, regulated or restricted by law.

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- Choose a dwarf (Greg, Taconac or Corthag) and one of their trusty weapons (baseball bat, bowling pin or shotgun).
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SEGA SATURN



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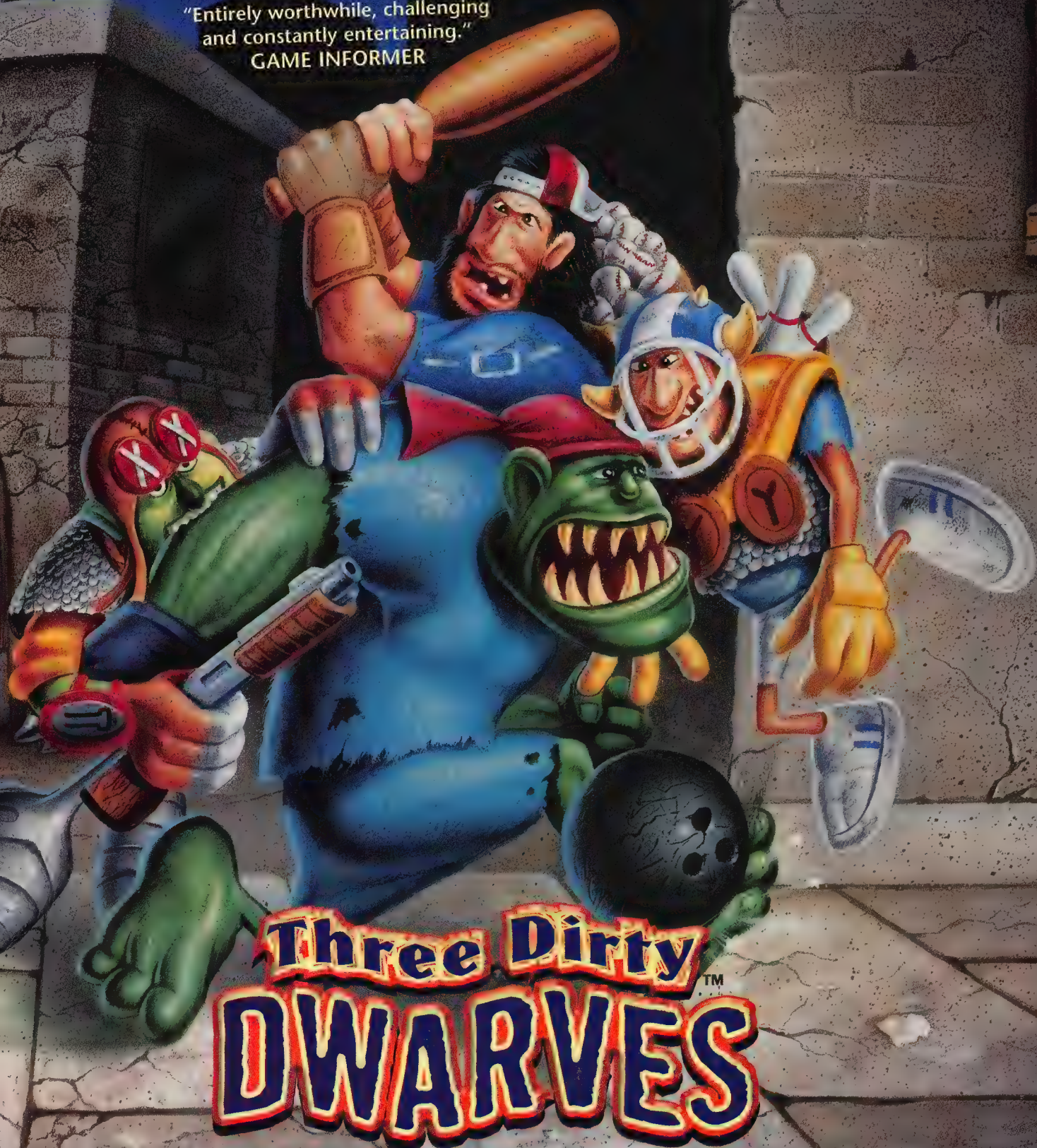
loads of character, interesting enemies and a completely distinctive graphic style."
NEXT GENERATION ONLINE

"Looks gorgeous and plays extremely well... even the loading screen is cool."
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GAME INFORMER

1 TO 3
PLAYERS

TEEN
T
AGES 13+



Three Dirty DWARVES™

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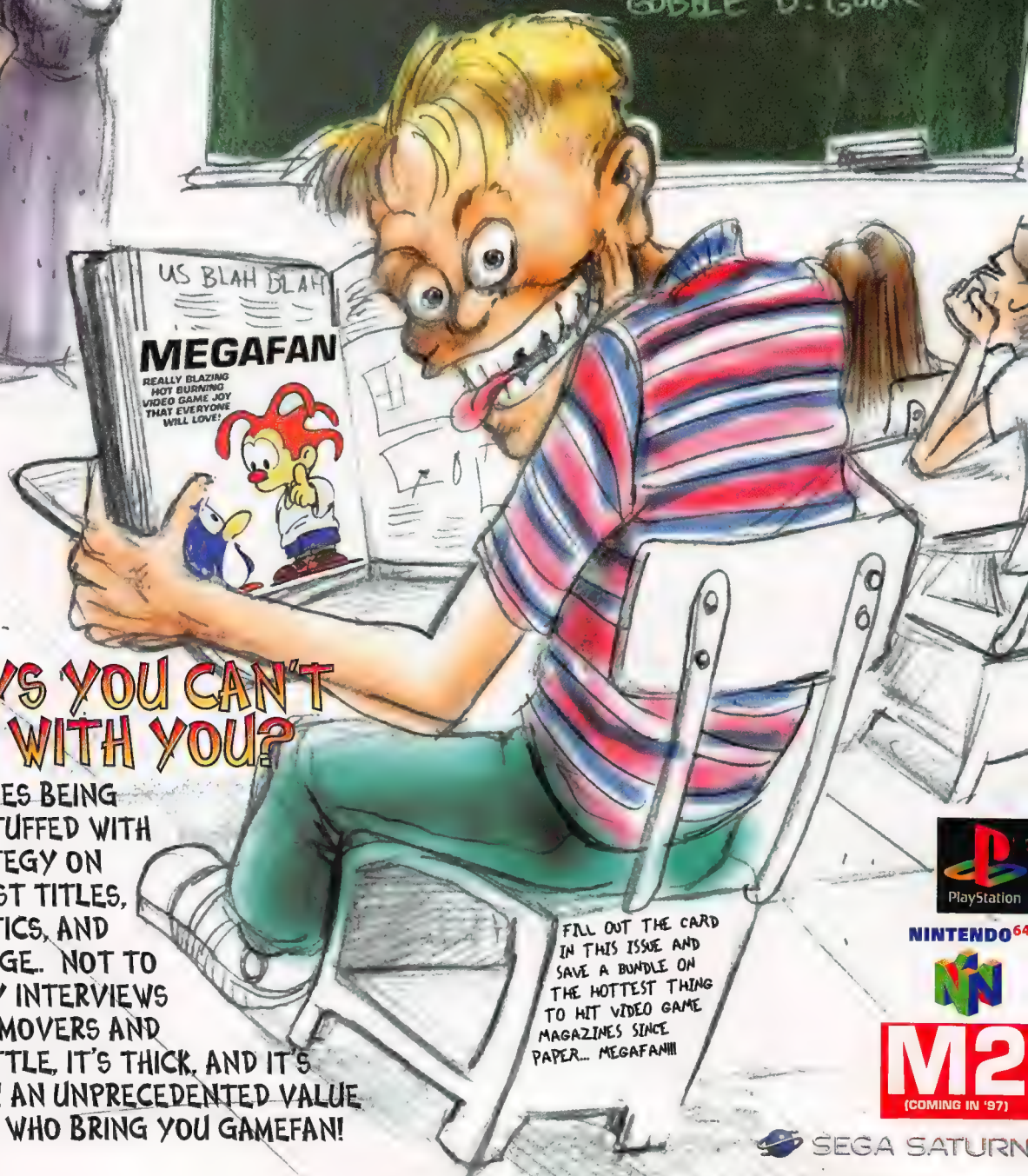
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NINTENDO 64



M2
(COMING IN '97)



SEGA SATURN

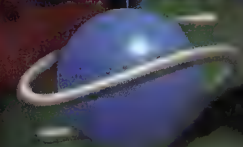


Not so many years ago, *Sonic the Hedgehog*, originally created by renowned designer Yuji Naka, put Sega on top. He started a roll that lasted for some two years and was the first mascot to give *Mario* a run for his money. He's the proud benefactor of four 16-bit sequels (some better than others), the best-ever Sega CD game, a 2nd-rate US cartoon, a phenomenal Japanese anime, a cool coin-op, countless merchandise, and a forgettable pinball game.

Save it to say Sonic has become a part of Americana. The US *Sonic* has undergone several cosmetic changes (straying from the Japanese original), and two mascots have been designed especially for him in Sega's quest for *Sonic* gold. He's made plenty of people plenty of money, but I was beginning to wonder... at what price? The US-made *Sonic Extreme* looked less than impressive at the last Gamer's Day, and would soon be delayed for improvement, a wise choice on Sega's part. That's when SDA let this cat out of the bag. Travellers Tale, some of Britain's most brilliant developers, makers of such phenomena as *Mickey Mania*, were simultaneously working on a Saturn version of the thought-to-be Genesis-only *Sonic Blast 3D*.

Now personally, if I were a Sega power, I would have launched the system with *Sonic* rather than Pepperouchau, the forgotten early Sega mascot. The engine used for *Clockwork Knight*, had it been made for *Sonic*, would have sold a lot more Saturns and launched the hardware as new hardware should be, mascot in tow, as the N64 has. *SM64* sold one to one. That's all I have to say about that. So the question is, against stiff competition, can Sonic repeat the magic of '87 and bring the Saturn back into limelight as he did the Genesis, or has Sega waited too long? Will *Sonic Extreme*, a US-developed 3D polygonal game (the Saturn's Achilles heel) be the true 32-bit *Sonic*, or will the masters at Travellers Tales, working closely with Yuji Naka, deliver the supreme *Hedgehog* romp?

P PREVIEW



SEGA SATURN

DEVELOPER - TRAVELLERS TALE

PUBLISHER - SEGA

FORMAT - CD

OF PLAYERS - 1

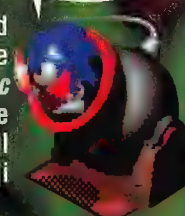
DIFFICULTY - INTERMEDIATE

AVAILABLE - NOVEMBER



E. Storm
SEGA FINALLY
WELCOMES SONIC
HOME. BUT IS THE
HOUSE CLEAN?

HERE I
COME...





The goal in *Sonic 3D Blast* is to collect 5 trapped furry friends from each area, free them, and progress to the next. Once you find their captors, rendered little, brightly-colored beasts, this is an easy task. Finding them is where the challenge lies. Waiting at the outset of each of the 7 areas is Robotnik, who I cannot comment on since he was missing from our preview version. In the 16-bit game, Robotnik was represented well, and since this game seems identical design-wise, I'm sure the same will apply. I am hoping for some dazzling effects to accompany his presence.

The level design in *Blast*, for an isometric game, is quite good. Each area is built both high and wide and features an array of pesky obstacles and enemies as well as secret areas, such as the cannon pictured here. Sonic has a new move to help him through each maze. By standing on a whirling fan Sonic will spin like a top. From there you can guide him towards pillars which he'll break thru, opening up new areas. Touch anything hazardous and the cycle is broken. This creates some formidable challenges and adds diversity to an otherwise slightly repetitious quest. There are of course platforms, tubes, loops and other such

Sonic fare in here, too, which we'll cover in the forthcoming review, along with the music and CG cinemas, which

UK-DEVELOPED, TOTALLY ISOMETRIC, YET, TOTALLY SONIC... NOW IF THEY CAN MAKE IT A BLAST WE'LL HAVE A HEDGEHOG TO PLAY WITH!



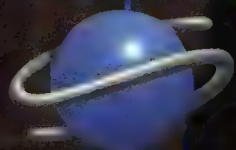
were also absent. Travellers Tale is doing a great job, working with Yuji Naka to make *Blast* scream "original Sonic," but seeing what they've done in the past, I know that had they designed *Blast* for the Saturn exclusively, it would have really blown our minds. *Sonic Blast* is a very good isometric actioner, but with no polygons, parallax, or 3D effects (except for the impressive Chaos Emerald rounds), will it be enough to quench a *Sonic* fan's 32-bit thirst? Of course, our preview version is only 50%, but the simple fact that this is a game designed originally for the Genesis, (although it features 32-bit goodies like weather effects and polygonal bonus rounds) is festering in my psyche. Then again, some of the best games ever created are on 16-bit. My hope is that both *Blast* and *Extreme* turn out brilliant, thus opening the door for another Yuji Naka *Hedgehog* adventure. *Blast*, I think, has the potential to be great. If more Saturn goodies are turned on, and the music is along the lines of the import *Sonic CD*, Sega just may have a hit on their hands. If it does and they do, more Sonic is sure to come... providing a certain Nightmarer doesn't stand in the way. ES

A true bonus!
SB's 3D rounds
are a blast!

Realistic weather effects such as the fog and rain below and rolling transparent water are
Saturn Blast's key features. Impressive, yes. But is it enough?



R REVIEW



SEGA SATURN

DEVELOPER - SEGA

PUBLISHER - SEGA

FORMAT - CD

OF PLAYERS - 1-2

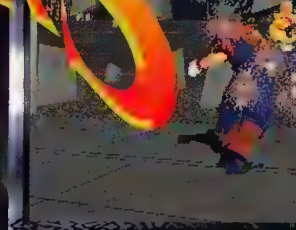
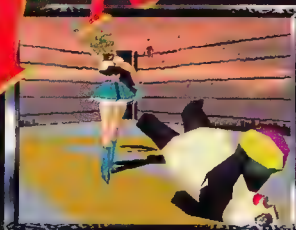
DIFFICULTY - INTERMEDIATE

AVAILABLE NOW



KNIGHTMARE

I'm not obsessed with Candy... really, I'm not (heh, heh)...



Seeing as we already reviewed the Japanese version of *Fighting Vipers* last month (everything Takuhi wrote still stands), I'll cut straight to the chase: What's been changed for the American release? Well AM2 fans, you can breathe a sigh of relief. American *Fighting Vipers* is nearly identical to the Japanese version. The armor breaking is the same, the extra options are all in there, and Candy and Grace both look as alluring as ever. The only major difference is the lack of Pepsi sponsorship. Without Pepsi, the Pepsi truck in Picky's background has become a Sega truck, the Pepsi logo on Picky's board has been returned to the Fighting Vipers logo (true to the arcade) and worst of all, Pepsiman has been removed.

Now, arcade purists probably couldn't care less about the loss of such a novelty character, but I kinda liked him. I mean, the more characters the better right? And surely they could have found some way around the legal problems. Maybe change the brand name. Lose the red stripe and make him Generic Colaman or something. Also, we couldn't seem to find Candy's two alternative costumes (we found all the other hidden characters straight away). Perhaps they were a bit to risque for good ol' SOA.

Right, now that that's out of the way I can offer you my two dollars worth on *Fighting Vipers*. Basically, I think it's awesome - as a conversion and as a game. The graphics may not be as sharp as the Model 2 arcade, and the fighters may not be as detailed, but the game still runs at 60 frames per second and Sega more than compensates for any visual deficiency with all the added extras exclusive to the Saturn conversion.

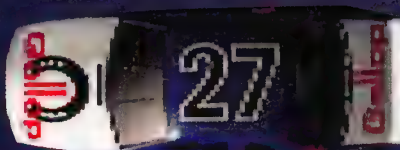
But most importantly, *Fighting Vipers* plays just like the arcade (or even better in the arranged mode!). It's fast, stylish, accessible and best of all, ultra-violent. The basic PPK derivative combos make it a much easier game than *VF2* to just pick up and play, while the huge range of moves and techniques give it nearly the same amount of depth. Plus the sharp, staccato nature of most of the characters' moves gives the action a really viscous feeling that no other 3D game has managed to capture so far.

I love this game. In my opinion it's up there with *VF2* and *Tekken 2* in the 3D beat-'em-up hall of fame. If you're a fan of the coin-op, a fan of *VF2*, or even just a fan of fighting games in general, you'd be a fool to miss this. K



DAYTONA USA[®]

CHAMPIONSHIP CIRCUIT EDITION



P
PREVIEW



SEGA SATURN

DEVELOPER - AM2

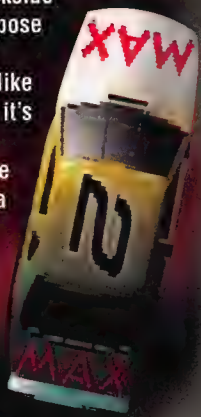
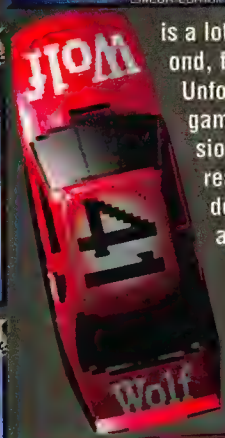
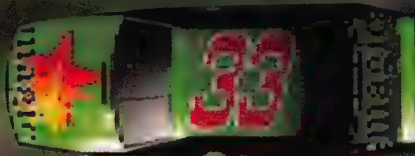
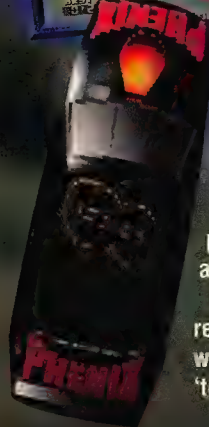
PUBLISHER - SEGA

FORMAT - CD

OF PLAYERS - 1-2

DIFFICULTY - INTERMEDIATE

AVAILABLE - DECEMBER



When the Saturn was first released everyone looked to *Virtua Fighter* and *Daytona USA* as an indication of the system's power. The best reason to own a Saturn was (and still is in my opinion) to play Sega's coin-ops at home, and these two games were Sega's highest-profile arcade conversions. But while *VF* exceeded everyone's expectations, *Daytona* was, well, somewhat lacking.

Basically the graphics sucked. The frame rate was low, the game had massive borders and the pop-up was so bad it was laughable. Comparisons were made with *Ridge Racer* on PlayStation and in aesthetic terms at least, *Daytona* lost pitifully.

But *Daytona* had a lot of fans. As Sega developed the Saturn's graphics libraries thousands of requests flooded into Sega HQ demanding a *Daytona Remix* in the same style as *VF Remix*. And who are Sega to argue with their fans? After AM2 finished *Sega Rally*, Sega put them to work on a 'top secret driving game' that was a secret to absolutely nobody. *Daytona USA CCE* was born.

Daytona USA CCE is a *Daytona* lover's dream come true. Two new intermediate tracks (National Park Speedway and Desert City), seven new cars (with varying attributes), new gameplay modes (endurance, time trial and grand prix), new secrets (that'd be telling), analog control with the new *NIGHTS* pad (trust me, it's brilliant), a new soundtrack (good and bad) and most importantly — *much better graphics*.

Yes, even in the early version we received it's clear that *Daytona CCE*



KNIGHTMARE

is a lot better looking than its predecessor. The game now runs at thirty frames per second, full screen (so no more borders) and in a higher resolution than even *Sega Rally*. Unfortunately, it's not all good news. In the 65% complete version that we received the game still suffers from SEVERE pop-up, even worse than the original *Daytona* conversion! Sega has assured us that reducing this pop-up is their number one priority, but I really don't see how it's going to be possible. There's so much trackside detail, and at times you get up to 10 cars on screen at once. I suppose after all this time I should just have a little faith.

Regardless of how bad the clipping is, *Daytona CCE* still plays like the *Daytona* I know and love, and with the new analog controller it's even better. Even in this 65% version there's no doubt that *Daytona CCE* is the most realistic, exhilarating racing experience out there, and there's still 35% left to come. I'll be back with a full review soon. **K**



P PREVIEW



SEGA SATURN

DEVELOPER - AM2

PUBLISHER - SEGA

FORMAT - CD

OF PLAYERS - 1-2

DIFFICULTY - CHALLENGING

AVAILABLE - DECEMBER



KNIGHTMARE

There's trouble in Virtua City. A wave of organized crime has broken out on the streets of downtown Megalopolis, and this time it's gonna take more than just a few bullets to clean up the city. It's gonna take a LOT of bullets! Special agents Rage and Smarty are back on the case and ready to deal some terminal justice.

We've received an 85% complete version at GameFan, and already *Virtua Cop 2* is looking hot. All of the thrills and spills of the spectacular coin-op have been faithfully reproduced with no corners cut: the car chase, the ocean cruiser, the train ride, all of it! *Virtua Cop 2* is twice as busy as the original, with more enemies, more objects and more interactive scenery than ever before. Items like bottles, cash registers and melons (!) can be

shot, bullet holes are left in the walls, all glass can be shattered and even certain vehicles can be destroyed.

Like the first *Virtua Cop*, *Cop 2* comprises three long levels (The Big Chase, Save the Mayor and Rail-Line Shoot Out) each set in a different location. To answer criticism of the first game's repetitiveness, each level has a mid-way junction point which leads to two entirely different courses through the stage. There's over a thousand gun-toting perpetrators to waste, and a new scoring system that doesn't penalize you for getting hit like the original *Cop*'s multiplier (though that's an option for you real sharpshooters).

Virtua Cop 2 is shaping up to be another one of those amazing spec-defying Model 2-to-Saturn conversions, and fingers crossed, we'll bring you a full review next issue.

K

VIRTUA COP 2





Just as I'm firing up my import version of *Toshinden URA*, wondering if SOA will bring it out, it gets dropped on our doorstep. Talk about service! *URA* is the first game in the series designed specifically for the Sega Saturn. The game features new characters Ripper, who dons Freddy Krueger-like mitts, and Ronron, a *Blue Seed*-like high school bad girl (a wolf in sheep's clothing, I assure you). The whole affair is brought to you in gleaming hi-res. and although the backgrounds are not as spectacular as *T2*'s, the fighters themselves look excellent, with more detail and less break up. We'll have a full report on *Toshinden URA* in the January issue.



TOSHINDEN URA

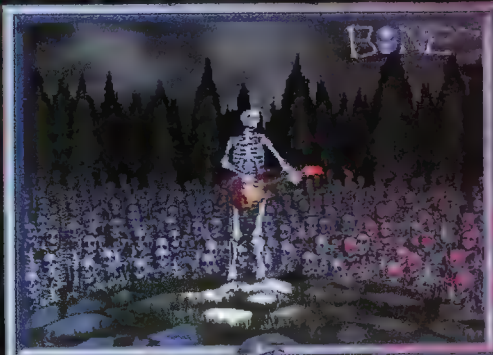
ONE OR TWO PLAYERS, POLYGON FIGHTER, DEVELOPED BY TAKARA, PUBLISHED BY SEGA, AND AVAILABLE DEC. '96



MR. BONES

ONE PLAYER, ACTION/PLATFORM(?), DEVELOPED BY ZONO, PUBLISHED BY SEGA, AND AVAILABLE NOV. '96

This is, without a doubt, one of the weirdest, most innovative games I have ever experienced. Just when you think it's an action/platformer, you come across a stage where you have to play an electric guitar, rescue Lilliputian dwarves from spiders, swim through a CD-streamed underwater tunnel or fly through a swirling *Tempest 2000*-style vortex. Segasoft has put a lot of effort into *Mr. Bones* and it shows. It makes the best use of pre-rendered graphics yet seen on any system, and features some of the best FMV cut scenes I've ever seen on the Saturn. It's so big it comes on two discs! Look for a full review next month.



HEXEN

ONE PLAYER, CORRIDOR SHOOTER, DEVELOPED BY PROBE, PUBLISHED BY GT INTERACTIVE, AND AVAILABLE DEC. '96

The pseudo-sequel to *Doom* is on its way to the Saturn courtesy of Probe, and it's looking mighty tasty. *Hexen* is a first-person perspective shooter in the style of *Doom*, but with some notable differences. First, you get the choice of three different characters: a warrior, a cleric or magic user, each with their own weapons and physical attributes. Second, the level structure is based around a non-linear Hub system, where each episode has a central hub level which leads off to a number of sub levels. Third, you can do all kinds of neat stuff you couldn't do in *Doom* like jump, store items, and best of all, look up and down. The game will be compatible with the Saturn link-up cable, and is currently running at a higher frame rate than the PlayStation version. Now that's a switch!





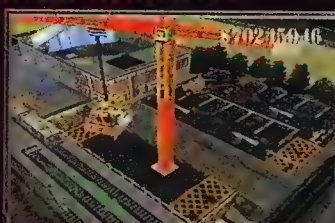
BLAST CORPS



The N64 seems to be blazing a bright trail through the videogame industry right now, and regardless of whether or not that trail is entirely justified, it cannot be ignored. Qualitative judgments aside (I turned up too late to voice my opinion), there's no denying that both *Mario64* and *Pilotwings* are unlike anything available on any other console at the moment (though clones are sure to follow). And that's a tradition that looks set to continue with Rare's second foray into 64-bit development: the original *Blast Corps*.

In the not-too-distant future the military uses hi-tech, computer-automated carrier trucks to safely transport nuclear weapons from one location to another. After a freak accident, the computer guidance system of one of these missile carriers malfunctions and the vehicle heads off its predetermined course into a populated area. That

57 DESTRUCTION-PACKED STAGES!!



CHOOSE FROM 16 DIFFERENT DEMOLITION VEHICLES!!

wouldn't be so bad in itself, but there's one other unpleasant side effect to this malfunction: the impact-sensitive nuclear warhead has been activated! Even the slightest jolt will set it off, and if that happens, you can say goodbye to everything and everyone in a ten mile radius. Uh oh.

The only way the military can salvage this situation is to make sure that the missile carrier gets a clear path, no matter where it travels. That's where you come in. You play the part of a crack demolition agent working within the Blast Corps, an expert trained to drive every known form of demolition



TIME IS RUNNING OUT!! STEER A PATH THROUGH BUILDINGS OR PEOPLE WILL DIE!!!



vehicle. It's your job to clear away any buildings or obstacles that get in the truck's path, using whatever means necessary!

Those 'means' take the form of 16 different demolition vehicles ranging from bulldozers to giant mechs. This variety of transport available is one of the coolest aspects of the game, as every level features between two and six different types of vehicles hidden away in the landscape. When you find another vehicle, you can swap between them simply by climbing out of your present vehicle and hopping in the driver's seat of the new one. Each vehicle uses a different technique for destroying obstacles, from the obvious to the not-so-obvious. For instance, while the bulldozer will simply plow right through buildings, the truck has to slide into them, and the mech has to curl up into a ball and roll through them. Other vehicles we've seen include tugboats,

police cars and trains!

Blast Corps offers over 57 fully 3D levels set in a myriad of different locations, all with their own natural hazards and problems. As you travel around the landscape the buildings lying in the missile carrier's immediate path are highlighted by pulsating arrows, and if the carrier gets too close you'll be alerted by a high-pitched siren. When this happens it's best to switch to the top-down satellite view of the action to get a better sense of the area, allowing you to plot a direct course to the trouble spot.

The 57 levels are split into three stages, and within each stage you have total freedom to travel between any of the levels. On top of the building destruction each stage also has its own set of specific objectives that have to be completed before you can move on. For instance, on

the first stage you have to find and rescue six scientists located at various points around the levels.

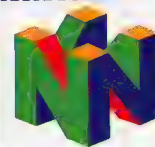
Clearing a path for the missile carrier isn't always as easy as just destroying buildings. Later on in the game you're forced to find ways to bridge rivers and ravines, or to transport a crate of TNT across the level to demolish a particularly tough obstacle. And no matter how powerful the Blast Corps vehicles may be, trees are always indestructible! To please the environmental lobbyists no doubt.

Manage to protect the missile carrier through an entire level and you are awarded with a medal for completing the task. However, you're free to re-enter the levels whenever you want to rack up bonus points by destroying non-essential buildings (represented by the dollar value of damage done!) or by activating the 100 Radiation Dispersal Units dotted around the landscape. As you earn medals and points, your ranking in the Blast Corps increases.

Blast Corps looks HOT! You won't believe the quality of the graphics, and if the gameplay is of a similar caliber we could well be looking at another essential N64 purchase. *WaveRace* may not have been all I had hoped it would (i.e.; not a *Super Mario Kart*-beater) but this next wave of N64 software looks set to wash away any doubts I ever had about the power of the big N. Bring it on, Rare. **K**

P
PREVIEW

NINTENDO 64



DEVELOPER - RARE

PUBLISHER - NINTENDO

FORMAT - CARTRIDGE

OF PLAYERS - 1

DIFFICULTY - UNKNOWN

AVAILABLE - MARCH 1997



Knightmare



THE DINOSAUR HUNTER IS BACK AGAIN!! EVEN MORE CARNAGE!
NEW SPECIES REVEAL THEMSELVES!!

RIP APART THE DINO-HORDES!!

HAMBLETON JUNGLE DIARY - LAST KNOWN ENTRY:
"SOFT FOOTFALLS WERE HEARD IN THE DISTANCE OVER
THE HUM OF MY ROTARY CANNON. I VEN-
TURED FORWARD THROUGH THE DENSE FOLIAGE,
CUTTING MY WAY TO AN OPEN AREA WHERE I SPIED
A LONE HUMAN DRESSED IN CAMO-PANTALOONS AND
ARMED WITH A RIFLE. PASSING THE ANCIENT INCA
STATUE, I BROKE INTO A FULL-TILT SPRINT, UNLOAD-
ING TEN ROUNDS INTO THE GROUND IN FRONT OF
HIM. HE LOOKED STARTLED, AND
AS I BROUGHT MY SPRINT TO A
FALTERING HALT, HE TURNED
AND RAN AWAY INTO THE FOG.
HE DIDN'T GET VERY FAR; I LET
RIP WITH THE FULL FORCE OF MY
GRENADE LAUNCHER AND THE
HAPLESS SOLDIER DODGED THE
FIRST SHOT, BUT WAS CAUGHT
WITH THE SECOND GRENADE
AND WAS BLOWN TWENTY FEET INTO
THE AIR. LANDING WITH A BLOODY
THUD, I QUICKLY SWITCHED TO MY
MISSILE LAUNCHER AND BLEW THE
CORPSE INTO SMALL TWITCHING
CHUNKS. WIPING THE BLOOD FROM
MY FACE, I CONTINUED MY GORE-
FILLED KILLING SPREE... ROUNDING
THE CORNER, I WAS SURPRISED
TO DISCOVER THREE RAPTORS
FEASTING ON THE REMAINS OF
A HUMAN. WITH NOWHERE
TO RUN, I CHECKED MY
AMMUNITION... NOT LOOK-
ING TOO HEALTHY. PULLING
THE BOWIE KNIFE

TUROK

DINOSAUR HUNTER

FROM MY BACKPACK, I EMITTED A PIERCING
SHRIEK AND CHARGED FORWARD. TIME FOR
GUNNER HAMBLETON TO GO ONE-ON-ONE WITH
THESE CRITTERS JUST ONE FINAL TIME...!"

THIS IS JUST A SMALL TASTE OF THE 64-BIT LOVING
JOY YOU CONSTANTLY EXPERIENCE THROUGHOUT
YOUR ENCOUNTER WITH THE DENIZENS OF TUROK:
DINOSAUR HUNTER; SET TO BE IGUANA'S FINEST
HOUR. REMEMBER MANY MOONS AGO WHEN YOU
GAPED AT THE FIRST SET OF TUROK SHOTS? WELL
PROGRESS HAS CONTINUED AT A FEVERED RATE
EVER SINCE, AND NOW GAMEFAN FEELS THE TIME IS
RIGHT TO REVEAL SOME OF THE MORE SPECTACULAR
PREHISTORIC BEASTS. AMAZING AS THESE SHOTS
ARE, NOTHING WILL PREPARE YOU FOR THESE

CRITTERS MOVING AT A SUPER-SMOOTH
30 FPS!!! PREPARE YOURSELVES,
NINTENDO 64 OWNERS; DINO-HUNTING
HAS NEVER BEEN AS SPECTACULAR AS
THIS! THOSE UNFAMILIAR WITH PREVI-
OUS TUROK UPDATES (BEEN LIVING
UNDER A ROCK?) SHOULD KNOW HOW
FANATICALLY EXCITED I AM ABOUT THIS
QUAKE-STYLE EXPLORATION RELEASE,
AND NOW THERE'S EVEN MORE TO
FROTH ABOUT; LOOK AT THE STATE OF
ALL THESE NEW ENEMIES!!!

FROM DINO-HUNTER TO BUG HUNTER! TUROK IS SOLID ROCK!!
GIANT INSECTS ATTACK FROM BELOW!!

TUROK TRAVELS THE KINGDOM SEARCHING FOR NEW VICTIMS!

EXPLORE STRANGE NEW ENVIRONMENTS!

THOSE WHO THOUGHT ALL YOUR TIROKING WAS GOING TO TAKE PLACE IN THE FOGGY JUNGLES ARE IN FOR A PLEASANT SURPRISE; HOW DOES A SEWER EXPLORATION SOUND? OR PERHAPS YOU'D LIKE TO CLIMB A MASSIVE MOUNTAIN SET IN A HUGE DESERT LEVEL? LATER ON, YOU CAN TRY YOUR HAND AT MEDIEVAL FORTRESS EXPLORATION, BUT I'LL SAVE THAT EXCITEMENT FOR A FUTURE ISSUE.

WHAT I CAN DETAIL ARE THE GOBSMACKINGLY AWESOME NEW MONSTERS AND IMPROVEMENTS OVER PREVIOUS VERSIONS. YOU'VE ALL SEEN THAT MECHANICAL ROBOT WITH A MINI-GUN AND A GRENADE LAUNCHER? WELL NOW HIS CHROME BODYWORK IS SO SHINY THAT YOU CAN ACTUALLY SEE A REFLECTION OF YOURSELF WHEN UP CLOSE (YES, REALLY)! THE ACTUAL COMBAT BETWEEN TIROK AND THIS ROBOT IS AMAZING, AND IGUANA HAS EVEN ADDED REALLY COOL NEW FEATURES LIKE SMALL PALM TREES THAT CREAK AND COLLAPSE WHEN YOU MISTAKENLY SHOOT THEM! EVERYTHING FROM THE TEXTURE-MAPPED RAPTORS TO THE WEAPONS YOU COLLECT IS SO DETAILED AND HIRES THAT YOU'D SWEAR YOU WERE PLAYING A REAL-TIME FMV VIDEO...

LATER INTO YOUR WADE THROUGH THE LANDS OF TIROK, YOU ENCOUNTER A GROUP OF TRICERATOPS COMPLETE WITH RIDERS, HUGE WORMS THAT ARCH OUT OF THE GROUND WITH A THUNDEROUS ROAR (DUNE, ANYONE?), PTERODACTYLS WITH HUMAN RIDERS THAT SWOOP OUT OF THE SKY AND A WHOLE NEW SET OF NATIVE GUARDS (ARMED WITH SPEARS, AXES AND WADING THROUGH AWESOME TRANSLUCENT WATER). MOST SPECTACULAR IS THE JOURNEY THROUGH THE CLOUDS TO A SKY-HUT WHERE YOU MEET A BRACHIOSAURUS. YEAH, ONE OF THEM 100-FOOT LONG PLANT-EATERS LIKE IN JURASSIC PARK. EXCEPT THIS ONE'S LIABLE TO BITE YOUR HEAD OFF. 'IMPRESSIVE' ISN'T THE WORD. 'GODLY' PROBABLY COMES CLOSE.

THIS VAST ARRAY OF CREATURES DOESN'T STOP HERE. HOW ABOUT A MUTATED CRAB CREATURE DURING YOUR SEWER EXPLORATION? OR PERHAPS YOU'D RATHER CHALLENGE A TRIO OF KOMODO DRAGONS (SPINY AND NON-SPINY VERSIONS) TO A BRAWL? ONCE INSIDE ONE OF THE MANY CAVE SYSTEMS, THERE'S EVEN A TRIBE OF BARBARIANS THAT TAKE AN ACTIVE DISLIKE OF YOUR WEAPONRY. SHOW 'EM THE TRUE MEANING OF THE WORD 'PAIN'! THERE'S EVEN A HUGE (AND FRANKLY GROSS) MANTIS SPIDER THAT NOT ONLY SHOOTS GREEN GOO AT YOU, BUT THEN CUNNINGLY SCUTTLES UP THE WALLS ONCE YOU LAY INTO HIM!

ADD TO THIS SOME BREATHTAKING LIGHTNING EFFECTS (IN THE SKY), FANTASTIC INCA STATUES, STONE COLUMNS AND ROPE BRIDGES OVER HUGE GAPING CHASMS, AND YOU'RE JUST STARTING TO GRASP THE EPIC NATURE OF THIS GAME...

BE SURE TO TUNE IN NEXT TIME WHERE WE'LL GO COMPLETELY OVERBOARD AND SHOW YOU THE GORIEST CLOSE-UPS OF MONSTERS THRASHING ON THE GROUND, MORE COOL LIGHTING

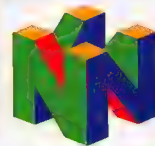
CREATURES FROM SPACE!!

ALIENS FROM ANOTHER WORLD THREATEN!!

EFFECTS AND YET MORE FOES (WHO KNOWS, WE MIGHT EVEN BE ABLE TO SHOW YOU THE LEGENDARY MECHANICAL T-REX)! MAKE NO MISTAKE; TIROK: DINOSAUR HUNTER IS GOING TO BE THE NEW STANDARD AGAINST WHICH ALL FUTURE 3D QUAKE GAMES SHALL BE MEASURED; THIS IS GOING TO BE HUGE! NOW IF YOU'LL EXCUSE ME, I'VE GOT AN ITCHY TRIGGER FINGER AND A FOREST FULL OF RAPTORS TO CULL...! CH

**U
UPDATE**

NINTENDO 64



DEVELOPER - IGUANA

PUBLISHER - ACCLAIM

FORMAT - 64 MB CART

OF PLAYERS - 1

DIFFICULTY - N/A

AVAILABLE - MARCH



CHIEF HAMBLETON

HOW DO YOU SCRATCH AN ITCHY TRIGGER FINGER?



DIXIE KONG'S

DOUBLE TROUBLE

P
PREVIEW

SUPER NINTENDO
ENTERTAINMENT SYSTEM

DEVELOPER - RARE

PUBLISHER - NINTENDO

FORMAT - 32 MEG CART.

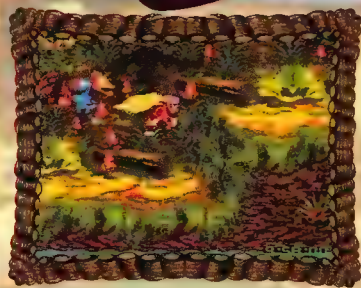
OF PLAYERS - 1-2

DIFFICULTY - INTERMEDIATE

AVAILABLE - NOVEMBER

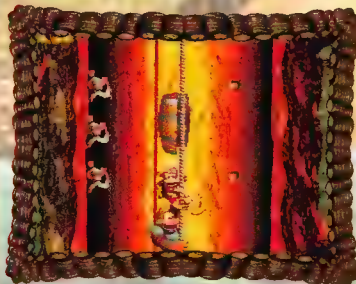


KNIGHTMARE
IT'S TIME TO
KONGO ONCE
MORE!



The *Donkey Kong* saga is set to expand once more with a new game, a new hero and an all new addition to the Kong family. *Donkey Kong Country 3: Dixie's Double Trouble* is the third installment (doh!) in the ongoing Kong saga, and it's shaping up to be the best yet. In a time when hot 16 bit titles are supposed to be dying breed, Rare come out of their corner fighting with this 32-Megabit (and battery-back up) monster cart that could well blur the gap between 16 and 32 bit even further.

In the original *DKC*, Donkey and Diddy Kong were out to reclaim their stolen banana horde from evil Kremling ruler Krool. In *DKC2*, Diddy and Dixie Kong sought to rescue a kidnapped Donkey Kong. And now in *DKC3*, Dixie and newcomer Kiddy Kong are



FUNKY IS AS FUNKY DOES!

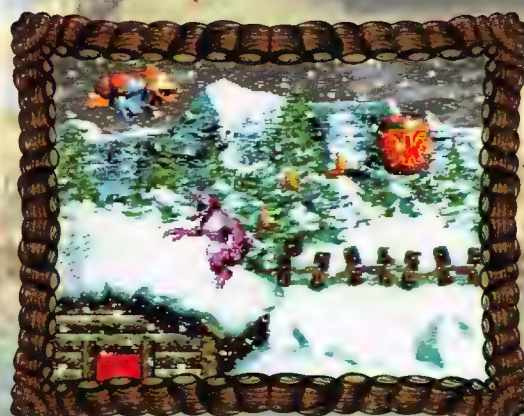
out to rescue a kidnapped Donkey AND Diddy Kong. I think I see a pattern developing here...

The basic platform structure from *DKC* remains the same, but with a host of new additional features. Where do I start? I know: the characters. Kiddy Kong is the newest member of the Kong family, so new in fact that he's still got his pacifier. But don't let his age fool you, Kiddy is as powerful as Donkey, and eager to prove it. He can attack with his arms, with a bounce, or a well placed roll to knock out multiple enemies. To encourage the teamwork element of the game, he can also hurl Dixie to high places, while Dixie can throw Kiddy as an offensive weapon. If Kiddy bounces off a wall, Dixie can jump on him and roll him along like a barrel! Cool!

The helpful Kong family make a welcome return, this time aided by some new jungle inhabitants. Funky's got a summer job repairing water craft, and if you can find the parts he needs, he'll reward you with a new means of trans-

RIDE 'EM, KIDDY!

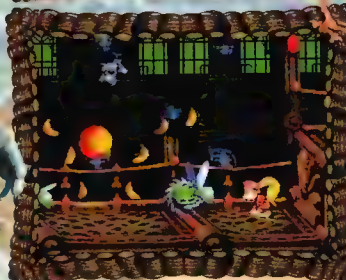
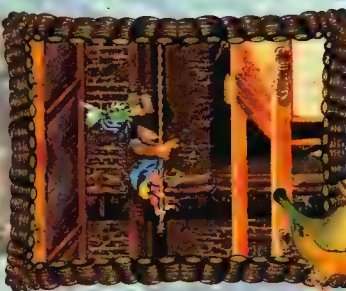
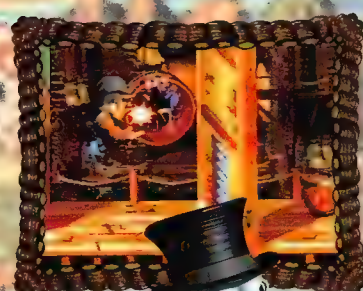




portation - a hover craft or boat perhaps? Swanky's Tent is also back in town with all new games to win yourself bananas or bear coins. Bear

coins? That'd be for the bear clan. The bears run a series of shops all over Kong Country, and by listening to their stories or solving their problems you'll gain essential advice or items to help complete the game. Locate Wrinkly Kong for an opportunity to save your game (Candy Kong was much easier on the eye), and watch out for one of five new animal helpers along the way, including Ellie the Elephant.

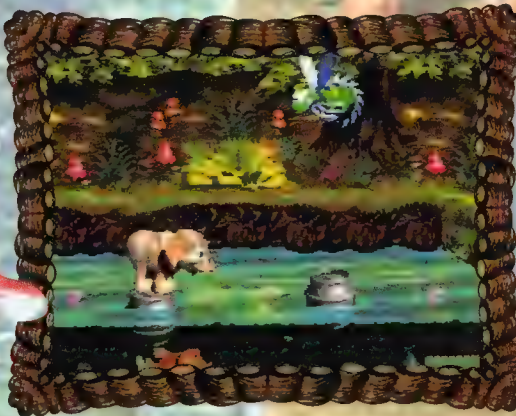
With this many new allies, it's only fitting that there should be an equal number of new adversaries for the Kongs to face on their travels. And Rare hasn't let us down. Under the rule of the new Kremling leader KAOS



you'll meet such foes as Klap, a killer barrel; Kopter, a flying Kremling with a rotor blade; and Koin, a Kremling wearing tough armor who is only vulnerable to attacks from behind. The boss encounters have also changed

in format from previous *DKC* games. Whereas before the attack method was always the same (bounce or barrel) now you'll have to work out a special way of hitting each boss. One boss even involves an into the screen snowball fight!

Rare claims that there are over 100 hours of gameplay packed into *DKC3*'s 32 megs, along with even more of the remarkable ACM rendered animation that you've come to expect from *DKC*. We'll have more on this hot title next month, but until then, keep your SNES warm. 16-bit is a long way from dead yet! **NK**



GEN-32

BATTLE ARENA

Fighting Vipers



Developed and published
by Takara • Available now
in Japan • Review • E.Storm

VF KIDS, HA! TAKARA'S GOT A SUPER
DEFORMED GAME THAT'S ALL NEW!



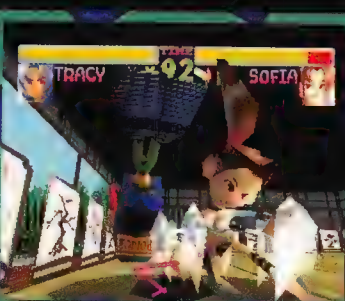
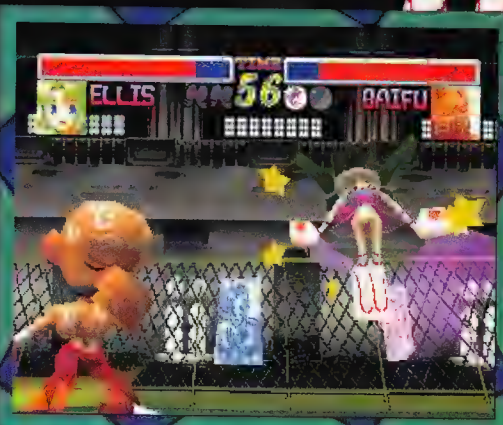
It's a new tradition in gaming... especially in Japan. Take a popular series, be it anime or game, squish the characters, and presto!, you've got a new sensation! If it was only that easy. It's always worked with Super Deformers (smashed little Gundams) because they've always been that way and it sort of (well, not really) worked with VF Kids, Sega's stand alone super deformed fighter. And don't forget, Namco added SD cars to Ridge Racer; Takara, big head mode to Toshinden; and there's a way to squash the players in Fighting Vipers as well. So you see

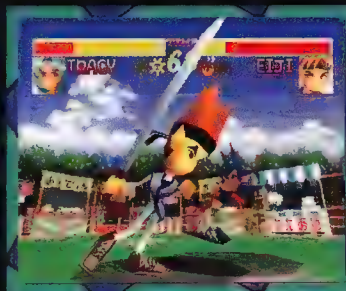


the trend. One similarity however, runs through all of those titles: besides being pint-sized, they're all the same game otherwise... not so exciting. When I first spotted Ni Toshinden in an import PS mag, I figured it would follow

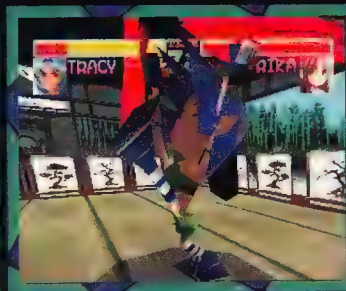


along those same lines so even as GF's lone Toshinden fan I didn't get all that excited. Once I popped it in though and found all new controls, hot-hot visuals and yummy music I began to enjoy this puny but packed fighter. Although I do not comprehend Japanese (I'm workin' on it) the on-board tutorial struck me as extremely well produced and makes me wonder why more fighters don't have live actors spewing forth combos and the like. From here it's on to vs., tournament, or vs. CPU gameplay, just like the



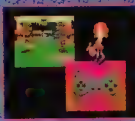


big boys. The first thing that strikes you when viewing the game's spectacular visuals is that everything is super rubbery. Tracy especially bends and stretches with the utmost exaggeration. Think Motor Toon fighters. Of course the vivid texture mapping, smooth 30ips frame rate and light sourcing from the wizards at Takara ain't too shabby either. In fact Ni Toshinden has better visuals than



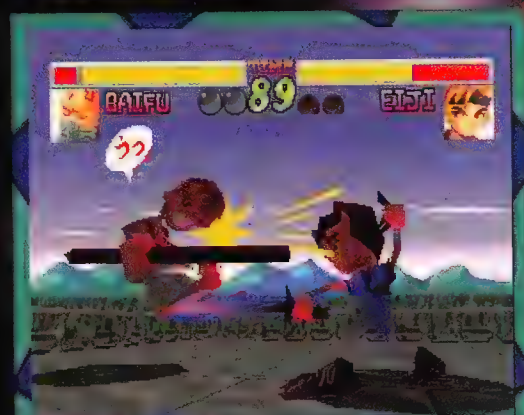
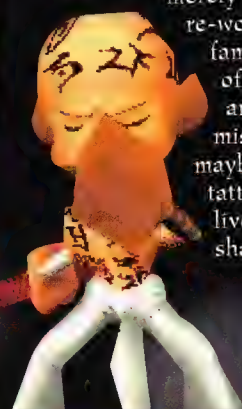
all previous games in the series except for Toshinden 2-PS, the king of the series. The control scheme in Ni is simple yet highly effective and combo friendly. Remember the cheap L&R moves from 1&2? Well, in Ni, every move is performed this way. That's right... one button. It works though. By combining button presses using the correct timing, the game has ample strategy and is just as competitive as any other fighter. This cruise control doesn't make the game any easier but I got a certain satisfaction from not having to spin the directionals for a change.

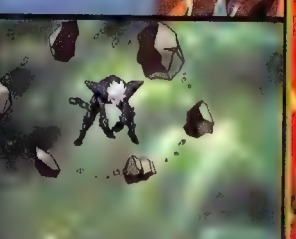
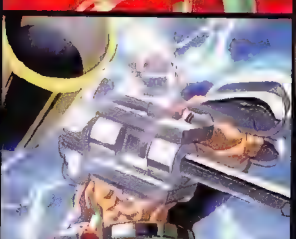
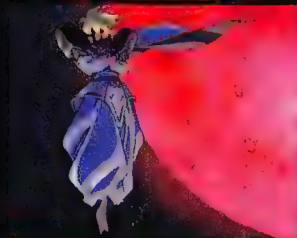
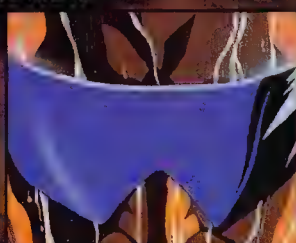
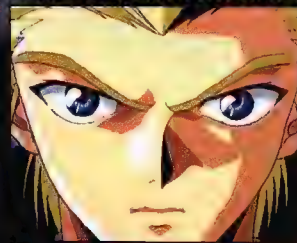
Now let's talk a little about these characters. I'm sure you



Having trouble with those combos? Ni-Toshinden's lively training engine will explain this entirely new game's ins and outs. It's in Japanese so watch those (tiny) hands.

either love 'em, or hate 'em. There's never been an in between when it comes to SD characters. I happen to love 'em, especially these ones. These are not merely small versions of the Toshinden cast but completely new, re-worked versions of the same. Alongside the Toshinden cast are famous characters from Takara's action toy line, an assortment of little warriors that range from the too cute to downright evil and twisted. Some of them rival the original cast members missing from this game, like the useless Rungo. Who knows, maybe we'll see Baifu in Toshinden 3. Any kid with that many tattoos deserves another shot! One thing's for sure, you haven't lived until you've seen Sofia's tiny body fitted with gargantuan, shall we say... augmented polygons.





The next great PS fighting game has arrived... in Japan. Taito's Psychic Force is a force indeed. It's high time somebody did something different... that works! PS's unique 3 dimensional floating environments coupled with great game-play and awesome special attacks make for the freshest fighter I've played all year. Not only is the in-game art very good ('cept for the most minute break up during win poses), but the



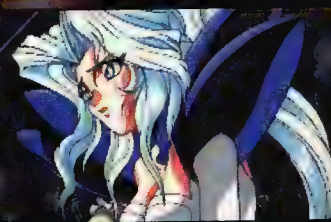
Developed and published by Taito • Available now in Japan • PlayStation Preview • E. Storm

サイキックフォース
PSYCHIC FORCE



anime style intro is one of the best ever conceived.

To top it all off, Zuntata's on board with one of their best soundtracks ever. We'll have lots more on this great new fighter from Taito, along with US release date information, next month.

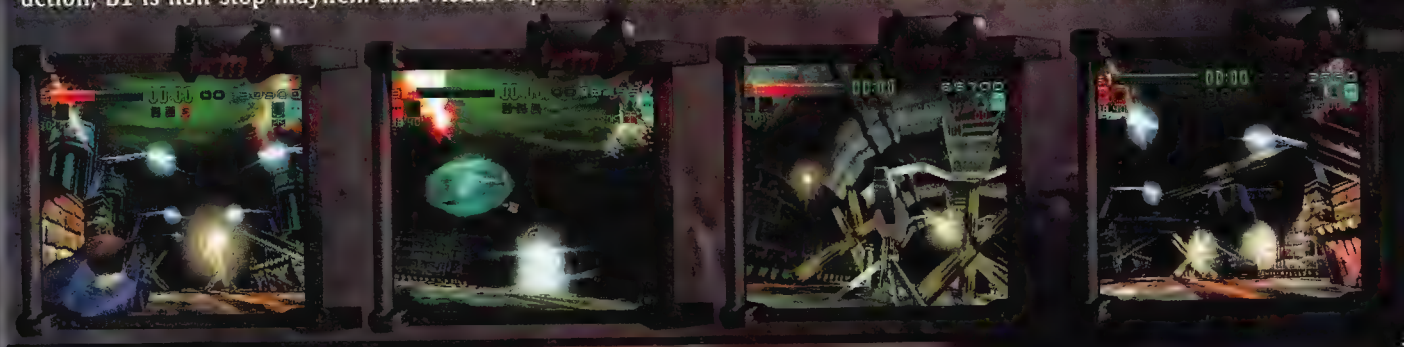


Up-to-the-minute special Preview



Developer: Neon (for Ocean UK) • Publisher: Acclaim • Avail. Nov.

Quite possibly Ocean's best game ever, Tunnel B1 (The import version shown here is titled Finalist) is an exercise in strategic shooting and light source shading. The difficulty level's turned on high but once you grow accustomed to the action, B1 is non-stop mayhem and visual euphoria. We'll review the US version in the January GameFan.





And not just pharmaceuticals! *Policenauts'* 8 billion pages of text cover such diverse topics as organ transplants, plant diseases, the history of chopsticks in space, the importance of calcium in an astronaut's diet, bone marrow types, the chemical composition of moon rocks, and the devastating economic effects of handbag counterfeiting. This version even has an on-line encyclopedia of the game's four-hundred-and-some technical

This 3 CD Saturn version of *Policenauts* is the absolute final version of *Policenauts*; a great game that's only gotten better in the three years since it was first released on Japanese PCs. The Saturn version is also the only one planned for an American release, an event sure to be celebrated by Saturn owners who are looking for something a little more substantial in their currently arcade-heavy diet. Substance is something that *Policenauts* has plenty of: It's



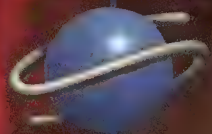
terms and acronyms only one button tap away. How 'bout that? Sounds dreadfully boring, doesn't it? Well, that's where you're wrong, padre. *Policenauts'* world is a masterful achievement, a near-~~total~~ scenario so intricately detailed, well thought out and full of originality it puts Hollywood's best attempts at sci-fi to shame. Full of heavy voice and quality animation, *Policenauts* is now more of an interactive movie than a digital comic, and a game that completely redefines the concept of its genre. Remember five or so years ago, when the idea of interactive movies on CD-ROM was Newsweek

one of those rare games where, as the credits roll, you find yourself thinking, "Wow, not only did I thoroughly enjoy this game, but I also learned a lot about the pharmaceutical industry!"

POLICENAUTS



R REVIEW



SEGA SATURN

DEVELOPER - KONAMI

PUBLISHER - KONAMI

FORMAT - 3 CD'S

OF PLAYERS - 1

DIFFICULTY - INTERMEDIATE

AVAILABLE - NOW JAPAN



cover material, and the talk of the industry? Unfortunately, Hollywood's take on the genre's possibilities was not quite to mine (or anyone's) liking... Just hearing the words "interactive film" makes me think of fat Hollywood venture capitalists screaming, "I know! We'll get Kirk Cameron! In a sorority house! Full of vampires!"

Luckily, level heads prevailed elsewhere, and among them was Konami's Hideo Kojima. His team began crafting brilliantly innovative sci-fi worlds that use the power of CD to make 15 hour quests capable of delivering settings so innovative and believable that they're capable of compelling basically normal, non-Trekkie types like Nick Rox, Orion and myself to spend our lunch breaks discussing things like, say, Wyroid-S, the disease that decimated all of the peopies on orbiting satellite Beyond Coast in the year 2035. Ah, Mr. Kojima does love his diseases, doesn't he? *Policenauts* is a hypochondriac's Candy Land, with full details on a dozen or so diseases and medical conditions that don't even exist yet.

Of course, some will be turned off by *Policenauts*' heavy use of technical terminology, and emphasis on text over action - for every 5 minutes of shooting action there's about 2 hours of visiting hospitals, examining people's handbags and questioning secretaries, but the storyline is so involving I doubt many older gamers will mind, or even notice. Though the story does have a few plot holes, the shocking twists and turns and an excess of memorable scenes more than make up for it. The bottom line is that *Policenauts* is a game like no other; a richly detailed sci-fi world with a complicated, fast-paced storyline that will keep you playing till the wee hours of morning.

The Saturn version of *Policenauts* has a few refinements that weren't present in the PlayStation version. In addition to the aforementioned on-line encyclopedia, there's a new movie trailer-like intro, a few new scenes (nothing major), one or two new brief intermissions, and a handful of small graphical upgrades sprinkled throughout the action scenes. The video quality isn't as good as the PlayStation's, but it is at 24fps this time (compared to 15 in the PlayStation), if that makes any difference (and it really doesn't). It's also compatible with the *Virtua Cop* gun, an option that makes the shoot-

ing scenes a bit more challenging, but a lot more fun. And in addition to all that, there are a few new news clips, a few new CD's on Kenzo Hojo's rack, and even a few new "flicking" scenes (if you've played *Policenauts* before, you know what I mean. And if you haven't, you probably don't want to know). Still, if you have the PlayStation one, I wouldn't rush out and buy this one, unless you really want the nice, 30-page hardbound art book it comes with.

There's still no word on the exact release date of the American version, but you can bet we'll be back with a full review of

Konami's translation as soon as we get it. Until then, you might want to start studying up on white blood cell abnormalities... You never know when it might come in handy.

T



TAKUHI



サクラ大戦

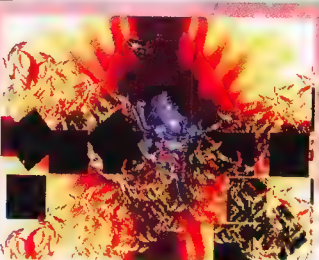
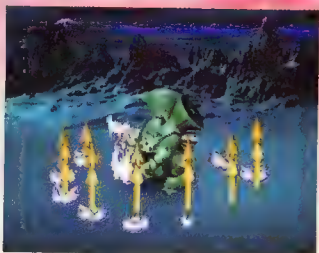
Sakura Wars

Sakura Taisen (*Sakura Wars*) may not look like much to American eyes, but this adventure/strategy title is likely to be the best-selling non-arcade translation of the Japanese Saturn's two-year reign. Even though it's a totally original game – not a sequel, not based on anything – it's had the remarkable honor of hitting the #2 spot in a number of Japanese most-wanted lists (beaten only by *Final Fantasy VII*).

So, what's the big deal? A lot of the hype was because of the staff, an A-list cast of the industry's most respected designers, including *Oh My Goddess!* character designer Kousuke Fujishima and *Tengai Makyo* series writer Hiroi Ohji.

The other part is simply the appeal of the concept to Japanese audiences: *Sakura Wars* mixes the high school dating thrills of such "puppy love simulations" as Japan's 1995 Game of the Year (no joke) *Tokimeki Memorial*, with the hardcore, CG-rendered military strategy of Square's *Front Mission*. Like that old Reese's Peanut Butter Cups commercial, "You got chocolate in my peanut butter," except that it's "You got military strategy in my dating simulator!" And I'm not even kidding.

Here's the story: you're Ichiro Ogami, a serious, straight-laced naval ensign in 1920s Japan. One day, Ichiro gets a mysterious transfer to the elite "Kagekidan" branch of the army, an honor he was thrilled to receive. But when he arrives, he finds his assignment is just to be some sort of usher at the Imperial Opera house, and all of his co-workers are the opera's attractive, young, all-female cast. Poor Ichiro only wanted to protect his country, not stamp tickets for Cinderella, and is horribly depressed until he learns the truth: The opera house is just a cover for Japan's top secret military unit that uses experimental, steam-powered (it is the '20s, remember) mechs! It's your





job to lead these mechs, piloted by the opera's cute young cast, into battle against a black-magic-wielding army of demons who want to overthrow the government.



DEVELOPER - RED
PUBLISHER - SEGA
FORMAT - 2 CDs
AVAILABLE - NOW

When you're not playing the beautiful, well-designed military strategy parts, you're wandering the halls of the opera house, solving inter-cast conflicts and flirting with your favorite characters. Whenever you're in a tough situation or are asked a sudden question by another character, you have only a few seconds to choose the answer (much like in real life), and one of two sound

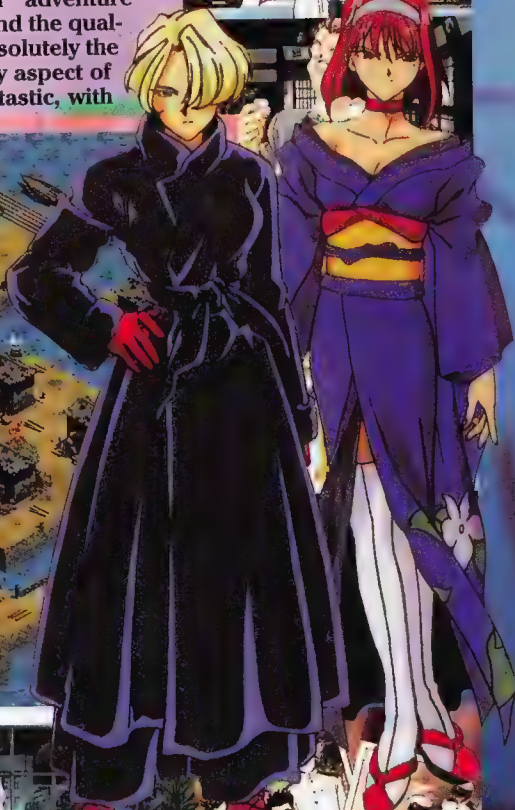


Takumi

effects will tell you whether or not your answer scored points in the questioner's eyes. The six female leads are ranked in order of how much they like you (via these conversation scenes), and the one who you have the most points with at the end falls in love with you forever. Awww.

The game is broken up into episodes, each of which has an anime-style preview, a separate plot, and a varying number of strategy and "adventure" scenes. There's plenty of animation in the game's two discs, and the quality is astounding - although it is letterboxed, the Cinepak is absolutely the best ever on the Saturn, especially in the intro. Actually, every aspect of the game (except for maybe the repetitive soundtrack) is fantastic, with great storylines, tons of cool little bonus games, great character artwork, etc.

Unfortunately, I can't really recommend *Sakura Wars* as an import, unless you're fluent in Japanese. The conversation scenes are literally half the game, and without the ability to understand the many important decisions in this part, the game wouldn't be much fun. An American translation? Although it sounds ridiculous, I know of at least one company who's thinking about it... I wouldn't hold my breath, but I'd be fascinated to see how something so off the wall and inherently Japanese could do here... Hey, I scoffed at first too, but now I'm hooked. You never know... **T**



R REVIEW



DEVELOPER - TOMY

PUBLISHER - TOMY

FORMAT - CD

OF PLAYERS - 1-2

DIFFICULTY - INTERMEDIATE

AVAILABLE - NOW JAPAN



KNIGHTMARE
GO, GO, GO!

TOMY II AKA: SPEED RACER GO GO GO

When you think about it, *Speed Racer* is one of the better candidates for a cartoon-to-videogame translation. I mean, a guy who races all around the world in a top secret car full of cool gadgets – it's practically a game in itself! So it comes as no surprise to discover that Tomy's long-awaited *Mach Go Go Go* is a *Ridge Racer*-style driving sim based on the antics of *Speed Racer* and the eponymous Mach 5. What may come as more of a surprise, however (well, it did to us), is that the game is actually pretty good.

On the surface, *Mach Go Go Go* looks like a hundred other *Ridge Racer* rip offs. All the generic standard features are here: three courses (short, medium and long), a choice of automatic or manual transmission, hidden cars (including Racer X), different viewpoints, an irritating commentary – everything you've come to expect from a PlayStation racer. And in the tradition of *Burning Road*, entire sections of the course (and soundtrack) seem to have been, er, 'influenced' by both *Daytona USA* and *Ridge Racer* (boy, have those tunnel builders been busy).

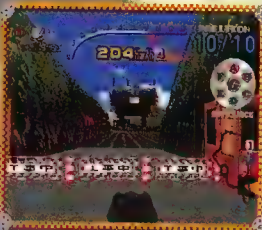
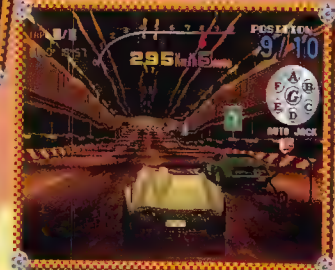
The graphics are good – not quite in the same league as Namco's classic – but still smooth and detailed, with a convincing sense of solidity. The sound is also above average, with authentic tunes and effects lifted directly from the show. Unfortunately, the vehicle handling is a bit of a let down. None of the cars have the ability to power slide, resulting in unrealistically sharp cornering. You do get used to it, but it's a far cry from the exhilaration of sliding horizontally around a tight corner in *Ridge Racer*.

Mach Go Go Go does have two major things going for it. First, the use of the license. The Mach 5 (the main car) retains its A-G gadget panel from the show. Each one of these gadgets can be used in a different fashion to aid your progress, normally by allowing passage through one of the game's many shortcuts.

All three of the courses are just different routes around one huge main track, and for each course there are a number of shortcuts. On the medium track, for instance, you can pass through a gas station, jump a fence (Autojack), drive through a forest (Chopper), go underwater (Frogger and Defender), then jump back out onto the track at the other end, cutting out nearly half a lap! Finding these shortcuts and using them effectively is half the fun of the game. (No gadgets for Racer X, though.)

Secondly, *Mach Go Go Go* is fast. And I mean *really* fast. Living up to its name, the sense of speed you get from playing the game inside the car POV is mind blowing. Burning through a tunnel at 340 kmh, the slightest bump in the road sends you flying into the air. Very cool.

There's no word on an official American release yet, but if the game gets picked up Stateside (a very real possibility, given the show's popularity over here) it'll be more than worth checking out. **K**



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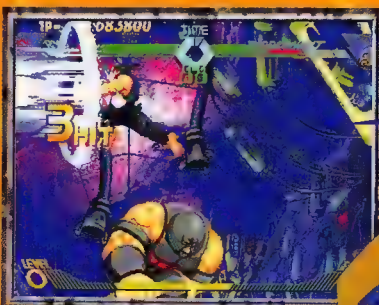
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ARE YOU READY FOR THE BATTLE OF THE CENTURY?!! STREET FIGHTERS AND SUPERHEROS FIGHTING SIDE BY SIDE!!

Capcom kindly granted us an audience to show us their latest 2D excursion into the *Street Fighter* legend. Although some may argue that Capcom have been milking the *Street Fighter* name for longer than anyone thought possible, no one can deny that all those extra versions have added a huge amount of playability and strategy to a once-jaded genre. Now we're coming up to the next big thing, the almighty *Street Fighter III* (which is already causing a frighteningly large amount of interest on the Net), Capcom's new fighter to set the standard for the next five years.

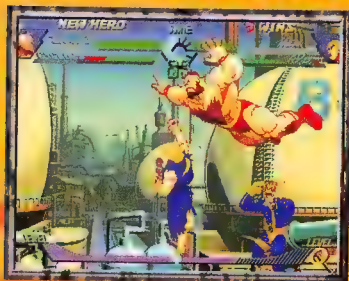


However, in order to plug the gap until this momentous occasion; and to ensure their arcade supremacy, Capcom has shocked the more righteous members of the arcade fraternity (well okay, Nick's not happy) by introducing the craziest cross-over ever seen in 2D fighting! The game? *X-Men versus Street Fighter*.

From the very beginning, let me stress the word *fun*; you won't get too much strategy out of this title, as the emphasis is mostly on spectacular X attacks, cool double-teaming and simple hits that cause multiple wounding. You won't be relying on expert precision to halt a barrage of flailing limbs; just power up and unleash your devastating special, then sit back and watch the pyrotechnics! Those who've played *X-Men: Children of the Atom* will be instantly at home here (identical play mechanics); this is essentially the same game with a couple of *big* differences; the hand-drawn graphics are even better, and there's a whole team



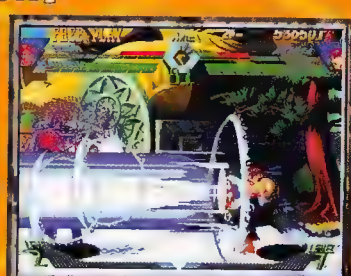
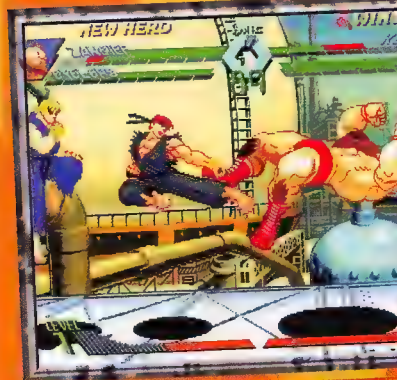
COMBINE MUTANT WITH STREET FIGHTING POWERS FOR THE ULTIMATE TAG-BATTLE!



of World Warriors anxious to test their might against (or even with) these powerful mutants!

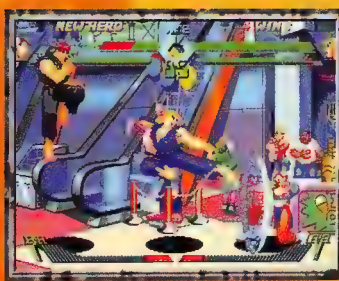
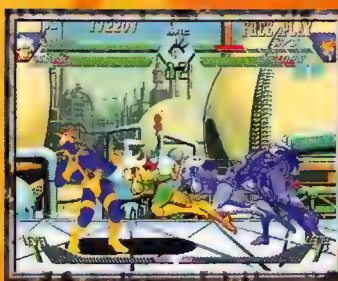
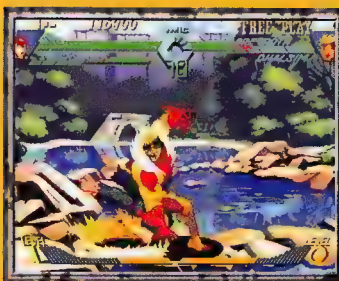
There's an initial choice of 17 characters to pick and you'll want to get to grips with all of them immediately! First though, you'll need to master the new premise that defines this game; tag-team action! Now your usual street fight pits one on one as usual, but players have the added option of switching between their team members at any time during the round. This doesn't just confuse your enemy; you can substitute a wounded team-mate and replace him with a healthy hero. The fight continues, and during this time, your downed fighter heals up to prolong the bout and add to the tension!

THE CROSS-OVER COMBINED ATTACK! CHARGE UP THE ENERGY AND UNLEASH!



WORKING TOGETHER!

CERTAIN CHARACTERS CAN COMBINE
ATTACKS MORE EFFECTIVELY! FIND THE
DUO THAT WORKS FOR YOU!



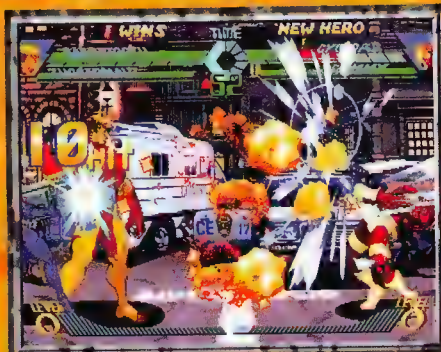
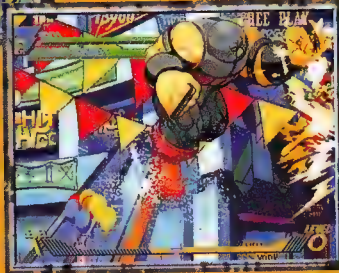
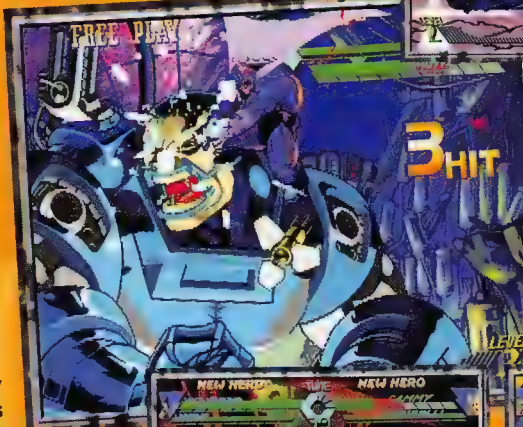
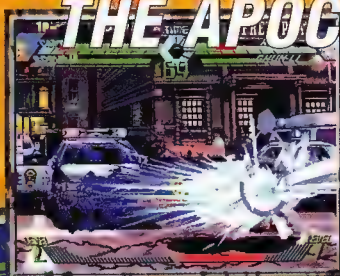
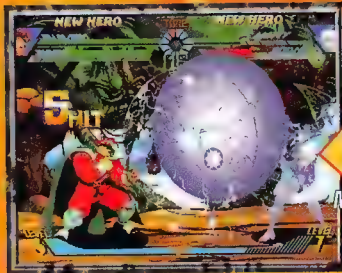
ENDURE SPECTACULAR BATTLES WITH THE WORLD'S STRONGEST BEFORE **THE APOCALYPSE!**

There's another reason to get all excited about this new beat-'em-up; the double character Specials! Providing you've powered your character up, he or she can summon their inner Chi (or mutant power), join with their tag-team mate and launch a devastating multiple hit on a bewildered and soon-to-be-damaged foe. What's even more exciting are the different effects you get by combining two characters: Ryu and Cyclops, for example, execute a full-on optic fireball inferno; whilst Bison and Magneto are content with some supreme psycho crushing.

For all these exciting additions however, I was expecting more from the new characters, but for the majority of the newcomers, I did feel a little short-changed. For example, the unfortunate Cammy not only looks rather tired, but animates without any finesse, and fails to produce any exciting attacks at all. Gambit has a commendable X-Attack involving those playing cards, but very little else; but Sabretooth does look really menacing, and even employs his assistant Birdie in one of his attacks! All the characters you've seen before have one or two new moves (Bison's fireball, which passes through foes and then explodes, and can be used to start a floating combo, while Ken and Ryu both have (gasp) air fireballs). Some backgrounds are slightly flat, and drawn in the same X-Men COTA style, meaning the *Street Fighter* crew look slightly out of place. Still, there's lots to look for on these stages (have you spotted that hairy green-skinned Brazilian yet?)

The final boss (Apocalypse) looks somewhat disturbing (a huge arm

EXPECT NO MERCY, MUTANT!!



a whole lotta fun challenging their mates to a spectacular exhibition of superhuman skill with their favorite characters. I can't wait for the home version to arrive, and although disappointed by the lack of depth, this is still a great 2D fighter. **CH**

NEXT MONTH MUTANTS!

MORE MIND-NUMBING ACTION NEXT MONTH!!
CHECK OUT THE AWESOME STREET FIGHTER
VS. X-MEN GUIDE IN MEGAFAN ISSUE 2!!

and not much else) but is horribly easy to kill ("Eat my flying foot!"), so gamers without friends shouldn't have much trouble finishing the one player. However, it is the head-to-head bouts that the majority of arcade punters crave, and insert their quarters to play; and *X-Men versus Street Fighter* is no exception. The arcade-meister will have this game licked in a matter of minutes, but the newcomer should have

P

PREVIEW

QUARTER



CRUNCHERS

DEVELOPER - CAPCOM

PUBLISHER - CAPCOM

FORMAT - CPS II PCB

OF PLAYERS - 1 OR 2

DIFFICULTY - A CINCH

AVAILABLE - RIGHT NOW!



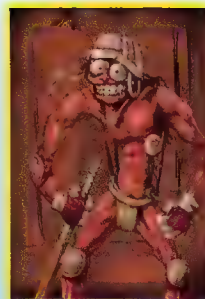
CHIEF HAMBLETON
MORE X-MEN THAN
STREET FIGHTER.

GAMEFAN

SPORTS



JOE KIDD



JACQUES STRAP

GameFan Sports Review

NHL '97



It's about time! NHL was beggin' to be 32-bit! The next-gen facelift yields a great 3D texture-mapped polygon engine running the arenas and players. There's also a ton of cool trading and Create Player options, as well as the expected season and playoff game modes. Did they mess with the gameplay we all know and love? Not a chance! Picture all that good stuff you're used to (great control, accuracy, and feel), and throw in drop passes, fakes, and pinpoint set-up shots. Every play-mechanic uses the PS pad to its fullest, and literally the entire gameplay experience hits you and stays with you within minutes.

NHL '97 is a fine, fine update of the classic series.

STRAP'S SCORE 91

GameFan Sports Review

NBA LIVE '97



In NBA Live '97, EA covers all the bases via player and game options - everything from signing free agents, releasing stiffs, and forcing trades, to creating your own player, along with his skin tone, and the style of his facial hair. I'm a sucker for these options, customizing my team and the season. It took me about 20 minutes to get the game started, resulting in, among other things, a 7'10" bruiser that could shoot the three.

Game time arrived and I was pleased to see clear and vibrant home team logos blazing upon shiny wood floors. The game itself invites a voyeuristic feel perched from an upper level vantage point, enhanced by court-side commentary. One disadvantage of this perspective is that you never really get quality close-up play. When I'm sitting up high at an actual game I tend to watch more of the game on the big screen monitors to get the blood, sweat and tears. I quickly came to terms with this perspective however, and really appreciated the other coveted aspects of Live '97 like all of this year's rookie crops, cumulative stats throughout the season (I love that stuff), and trade deadlines. Over all, Live '97 is enjoyable especially for option lovers and stat freaks.

JOE'S SCORE 85

"STRAP"

VIEWPOINT

"JOE"

I've played both hockey games extensively this month (this and NHL '97) and I've come away with this conclusion: I love playing both games. NHL Face Off has the crisper 3D engine, and better sound, but lacks the classic gameplay feel of NHL '97. Everything's still great, with multiple views, Create Player options, and full NHL support, but the gameplay isn't quite as refined as in NHL '97. I'm not complaining, the game has top notch control, second-nature play-mechanics, and hot looks, but EA's got experience on its side.

G C P M O 85



NHL Face Off
PlayStation
Sony

Right off the bat the best thing about Face Off for me is the control factor. Hockey games in the past have players sliding all over the place so that you can't ever do what you intend, let alone catch up to the ever-moving puck. That fact alone saved my thumb muscle from cramping up after 5 minutes, thus allowing me to enjoy the smooth play of Face Off and to actually implement a little strategy here and there. I love the fast pace, too.

G C P M O 84

Well, it ain't World Series 2, but on the PS, Pennant Race is my "number one guy." You got your red hots, your 700 plus players, your stadiums, and all those juicy season options. Create a Player lets you bust out your own custom pitchers and players, and the in-game options throw loads o' views and fielding options your way. The cherry comes with the control, which is fantastic, instinctual, and beyond easy to pick-up. A baseball must-buy.

G C P M O 89



MLB Pennant Race
PlayStation
Sony

I was never into baseball games much, but I tell ya, this one had me smiling the whole time and I insisted on taking it home with me. It's easy enough for a rookie like me to play, yet realistic enough to take it serious. Plus, I always associate baseball with "slow" but PR manages to put the heat on and comes up with a winner.

G C P M O 92

Wee-haw! 3D wrestlin' on my PlayStation! Awesome texture-mapped polygonal stadiums and wrestlers, a blazing frame rate, and perfect camera angles combine to form a visual masterpiece. Kick in some freakin' hot moves, dead-on control, and spleen busting realism - courtesy of great motion-capture - and playin' Power Move is just like watching it...pure, anabolically enhanced, wrestling joy!!!

G C P M O 94



Power Move Wrestling
PlayStation
Activision

Well it seems Power Move is a big hit with everyone... everyone, except maybe me. I have to admit I was quite taken with it at first and I couldn't stop playing it. Movements were very realistic and the 12-Man Gauntlet mode was challenging. But in the end, there wasn't enough for me; not in concept, moves, action, graphics, music or sound effects. Of course I didn't have any preconceptions going in nor was I looking for anything in particular. Sorry, just not for me.

G C P M O 74

KIDD'S CORNER



Greetings, sports freaks, Joe Kidd here, fresh out of Nor-Cal, the latest free agent signing on here at Gamefan. Well, I can hardly believe I'm saying this, but it's nice to be down from the Bay Area and in LA. I mean, sports-wise, I'm tired of Al Davis and his tireless Raider antics, games at the Oakland Coliseum with construction cranes in the background, the Giants' Barry Bonds crying about his daddy, the Warriors and their paltry off-season moves... However, Ilfe in Southern California has begun on a good note, with my mighty (5-0) California Bears coming into Riotville and taking down the University of Spilled Children Trojans and their latex quarterback. Shaq is in the house along with Kobe, Eddle, Van Exel, Ceballos and Elden... Can you smell Championship? Tiger Woods has awakened from his slumber and is tearing up the fairways, Alomar's loogie-hawking days have been cut short, and it's been rumored that Michael Irvin will counsel him throughout his 5-game suspension. In hockey, it's the first time they've had an NHL team in Phoenix. Can you imagine... Ice hockey in the desert? And they're undefeated! On the other hand, New York, a virtual hockey mecca in comparison, has united two of the best ever in MESSIER and GRETZKY, and they can't buy a win. Midnight Madness is upon us as college campuses everywhere get ready to hoop it up. But where are all the stars? With the recent exodus of undergrads flocking to the NBA, ala Kevin Garnett, it's more like Midnight Mediocre. Well, I'm signed up for my NBA package on DSS. How I'll watch 800 games... I'm still working on the numbers. In the meantime I'm lacing up the boots en route to the black top.

FROM THE NATIONAL ANTHEM... TO THE OPENING TIPOFF!

IN THE ZONE 2



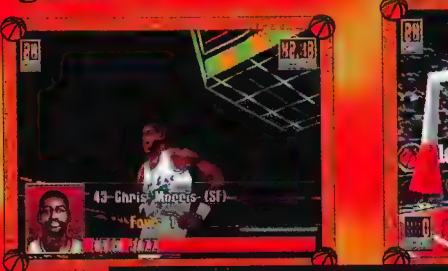
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CUSTOMIZED MOVES:
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PENALTIES ASSESSED... FREETHROWS AWARDED

Even though I haven't even seen the finished version yet *In The Zone 2* is still, the most engaging, provocative, real-to-life, fluent, detail-oriented basketball game ever to grace the shelves of game retailers. *ITZone 2* has moved beyond the stiff, impersonal drudgery of past hoop game generations, and has replaced them with accurately simulated NBA players, bodies writhing in the air for rebounds, chests heaving for more oxygen, legitimate back to the basket, low-post moves, clear-cut behind the back and between the leg dribbling, and timing that is so balanced that it blends all of the components of this masterpiece into effortless enjoyment.

Two features that really sold me were the "Trade" feature and the "Create Player" option. With the trade feature all of you fantasy GM types can have the time of your life dreaming up any combination you desire. (I assembled the Nike "Revolution" team with Jason at the helm -- and this broadcast was televised). Trade features have been offered before, but only now can I really enjoy NBA player resemblance in appearance and play-style. For those of you looking for MJ, Shaq or Barkley they're not to be found, but a quick remedy is found in simply trading for Penny, Hakeem or Malone. In the Create Player option I can now give birth to a 7'7" rebounding machine, a versatile swingman to shoot the trey or a feisty playmaker to lend leadership to my favorite team.

The Winter will heat up with this Holiday release, just in time for hoop season! Yes ladies and gentlemen, Konami has put some serious hops into this one, and showtime is back. **JK**

GAME OPTIONS

HOME COURT ADVANTAGE	OFF
DIFFICULTY	STARTER
CAMERA	LIVE
QUARTER LENGTH	2 MINUTES
REPLAY	ON
FOUL SETTINGS	LOOSE
STAMINA	ON
HANDICAP	ON
QUIT	

TRADE OPTIONS:
IMAGINE... REGGIE MILLER ON THE KNICKS, OR OLAJUWAN ON THE SUNS. THIS OPTION MAKES YOU AN NBA FANTASY GM!



PREVIEW



DEVELOPER - KONAMI
PUBLISHER - KONAMI
FORMAT - CD
OF PLAYERS - 1-2
DIFFICULTY - ADJUSTABLE
AVAILABLE - NOVEMBER



CREATE PLAYERS!



JOE KIDD

P PREVIEW



DEVELOPER - SCULPTURED

PUBLISHER - ACCLAIM

FORMAT - CD

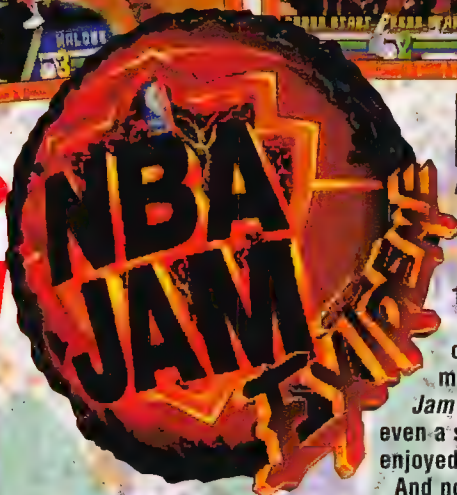
OF PLAYERS - 1-4

DIFFICULTY - BEG.-ADV.

AVAILABLE - NOVEMBER



JOE KIDD
KIND OF LIKE SAMMY
AFTER DAVID LEE ROTH:
DIFFERENT BUT GOOD



NBA Jam Extreme will be out this season to turn the lights out on the competition and bring Acclaim back-to-back championships in 1997. Acclaim has its hands full trying to topple the success of *NBA Jam: Tournament Edition* (released in 1996); with its rim-hending dunks, jaw-rattling body slams, and all the other lightning paced features that made *Jam '96* a sports fan's addiction. *Jam '96* proved to be so exciting that even a sore loser like myself fervently enjoyed losing for hours.

And now, on with the preview. What was once a neck-breaking, full-court, 2-on-2 battle has suddenly slowed down to the speed of a half-court game. Sculptured may speed things up by game time but I'm not convinced I want them to. The new polygonal 3D engine provides more realism; even goaltending penalties are called much more frequently. In addition, users can now choose from several different offensive and defensive strategies. They've even added a dive feature where you literally hurl yourself at the opponent. Unfortunately, one change that wasn't made was not allowing us the luxury of making player substitutions until quarter's end (maybe a blessing in disguise since the extended load time is somewhat of a buzzkill).

Big name players are one of the main attractions of *NBA Jam* and *X* has doubled the amount of stars (6 per team) to choose from, including all of the rookie standouts like Joe Smith, Damon Stoudamire, and Kevin Garnett. To enhance the playoff like atmosphere, a center court giant screen has been added, as well as cheers of "Defense!" from the crowd, along with Marv Albert's relentless play-by-play. However, the crowd's applause sounds more like Gary Player sunk a putt for par, rather than Shawn Kemp electrifying 20,000 beer drinkers.

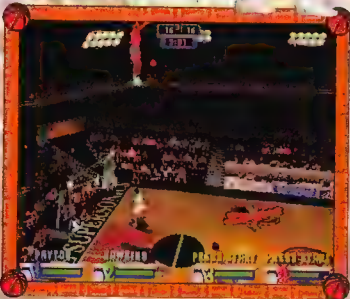
It appears in *X* we have a more serious and realistic version of its predecessor. But are we losing the essence of the game which is found in fantasized exaggeration? I'll be the first to admit that I don't readily invite

change to things I've enjoyed so thoroughly. But while there are obvious differences between the two expressions of this game, I'm hoping that it's one of those things that has to grow on me.

Kind of like Sammy after David Lee Roth - different but good. We'll wait to see and discuss this denial and acceptance thing in January. **JK**



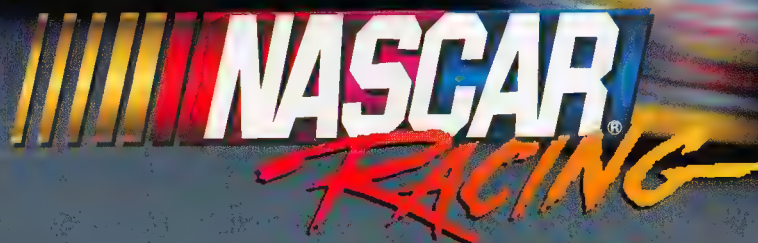
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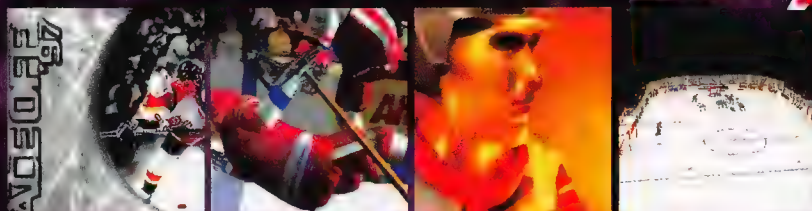
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NHL FACE OFF '97

4 DIFFERENT
PERSPECTIVES!



GAMEFAN
SPORTS



REVIEW



DEVELOPER - SONY

PUBLISHER - SONY

FORMAT - CD

OF PLAYERS - 1-2

DIFFICULTY - ADJUSTABLE

AVAILABLE - NOW



JACQUES STRAP

IS WOLFGANG
PUCK AN
HONORARY
CITIZEN OF
CANADA?



PLAYOFF PICTURE!



CREATE PLAYERS!



PLAYER PROFILES!



THE FACEOFF:
GET READY TO RUMBLE

I'm just a lonely sports editor. For the past couple of weeks, though, I've been keeping good company. My new buddy: Sony's *NHL Face Off '97*. I'm GF Sports' biggest hockey fan, and this game is one of the best I've ever seen.

Face Off '97 is so complete it's scary. One look at the menus, and I'm seeing all the options I could ever need. You know, period length, difficulty levels, penalties, exhibition or season and playoff modes, etc. That's all cool, sure, but step onto the rink and true hockey bliss is all yours. Gameplay has never felt this second nature in a hockey game. The goods: one button to get closer, one button to shoot, and one for your speed bursts. That, my friends, is the way it should always be. Combined with this easy control are play mechanics that the great Lord Stanley would be proud of. Moving your player is realistic up to a certain point (hey, you're on skates, right?), but the skating is accurate, passing is hyper-instinctive, and the collision detection during play and fights feels just right.

If anything bad ever happens, it's your fault, not the game's.

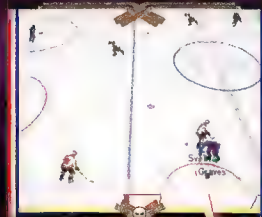
The hot gameplay is surrounded by some scorching graphics and great digitized sounds. Players are well-animated traditional sprites, and the 3D rinks and arenas are constructed of texture-mapped polygons moving at a silky 30 fps. Besides the awesome textures covering the crowd and arena, you'll also see loads of team logos thanks to the NHL license. Multiple views are also included, so if you don't like how you're seeing the game, change it!

Sony is on a sports roll. I'm sure they recognize just how important this genre is in determining success in the US. One thing's certain: *NHL Face Off '97* is an amazing hockey game that should make a lot of people happy. JS

DIAGONAL

SIDE VIEW

ICE LEVEL

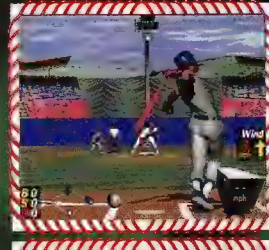


POWER PLAY:
SCORE WITH AN EXTRA
MAN ADVANTAGE





MLB PENNANT RACE



Sony's got a whole lotta sports joy lined up for PS players this fall. Joining the wicked NCAA GameBreaker will be NFL GameDay '97, NHL Face Off '97, and the game you're lookin' at right now, MLB Pennant Race. They're all making a serious case for Sony to grab hold of the 32-bit sports crown from Sega.

Pennant Race is a realistic simulation in every possible way. Using CD storage to its advantage, PR has both Major League licenses (MLB and MLBPA) and includes over 700 players, every stadium (texture-mapped and accurately measured), and every team. The well-animated motion-captured players will actually appear in their home or away uniforms, depending on the game... major realism!

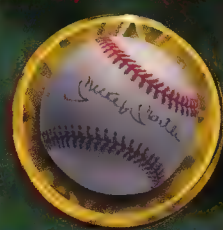
The player moves and animations include lunging dives, turf-munching slides, jumping, and wall-climbing home-run saving catches (using lots of easy button/controller combinations). The coolest feature, as far as game-play goes, involves the use of the diamond-shaped PS pad button layout. Each button represents a base, so if you're throwing to second, for example, all you gotta do is press triangle (the top of the diamond) and it's there. The game also shows you the diamond layout when you're pitching and batting and let's you choose various styles and speeds (sinker, fast-ball pitches, and contact, power bats etc.) before beginning the play. Just like *Bottom of the 9th*, you'll be "aiming" your swing with a little targeting circle. While it works better than in *9th*, allowing for more accurate timing, I'm still not sure I like the idea.

Everything else about *Pennant Race* is perfection. You can enter the playoffs, Homerun Derby, a 162 game season, and create your own player (customize player attributes like Speed, Arm, Glove, and more). Infield and outfield views and plays can be changed anytime, as well as stadiums. You read correctly, if you're gettin' sick of the stadium you're in, simply load up a new one, mid-game, and continue!

Overall, Sega's *World Series 2* remains my pick the baseball king. *MLB Pennant Race* is, however, the undisputed champ of PS baseball and comes very close to matching the perfect feel that *WS2* offers. Comparisons aside, *Pennant Race* is one heck of a good baseball game. JS



GAMEFAN SPORTS



REVIEW



DEVELOPER	- SONY
PUBLISHER	- SONY
FORMAT	- CD
# OF PLAYERS	- 1-2
DIFFICULTY	- ADJUSTABLE
AVAILABLE	- NOVEMBER



JACQUES STRAP
THE KING OF PS
BASEBALL



RIFLE ARM OR BELLY-ITCHER? CLOCK THE SPEED OF YOUR PITCHER.

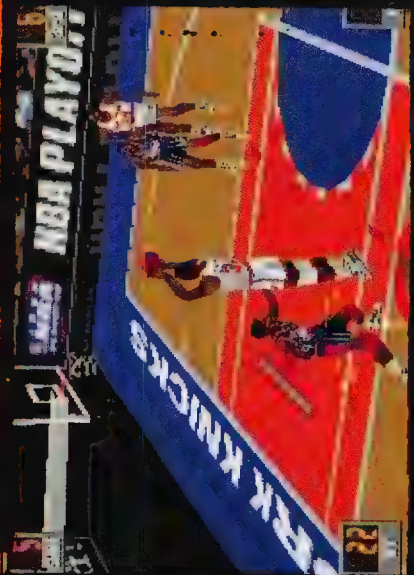




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2XTREME

GAMEFAN
SPORTS

P
PREVIEW



DEVELOPER - SONY

PUBLISHER - SONY

FORMAT - CD

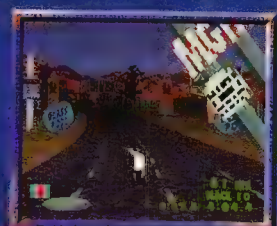
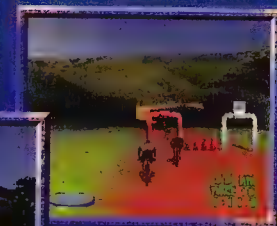
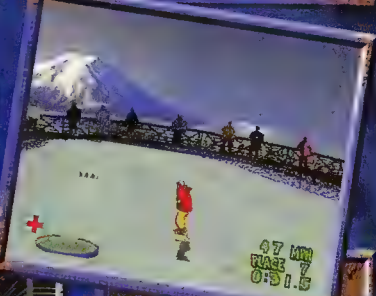
OF PLAYERS - 1-2

DIFFICULTY - ADJUSTABLE

AVAILABLE - NOVEMBER



NICK ROX



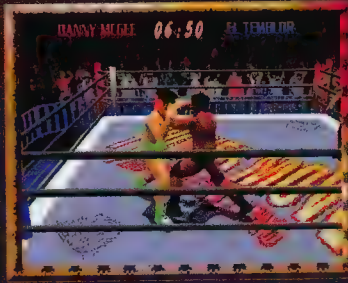
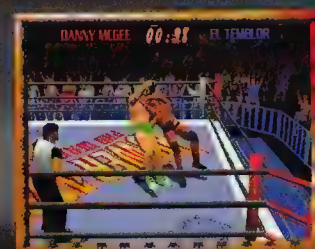
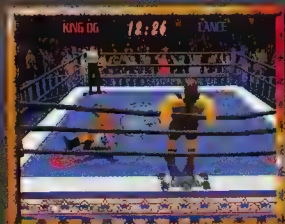
Few of the first-generation PlayStation titles that shipped with the system really stood out as great games. Out of the relative drivel like *Raiden Project*, *Total Eclipse Turbo*, *Street Fighter the Movie* and *Toshinden* only two can I look back on and think "Now those were great." They both happened to be racing games, and one of them went on to be the top-selling PS game in America for quite a while: *ESPN Extreme Games*. No wonder — *Extreme* mixed *Road Rash*-esque fun (beating your opponents bloody while careening about) with luscious polygon graphics that only the PlayStation could provide.

As you can see, Sony's back with a sequel... *2 Xtreme*. This sequel's lost little except the ESPN license (it's "xtremely" similar to the original) yet has gained one new event and better graphics. As in *ESPN*, you begin the game by selecting from an assortment of OG athletes (is it just me or are there, like, two white guys in the posse?), or, via a cool new creation menu, make your own challenger. You can distribute your points as you see fit, concentrating on one event or crafting a well-rounded competitor. From there it's off to one of the events: skateboarding, blading, biking, and the newcomer, snowboarding. There's a puzzling lack of the street luge from the original, but don't fret; snowboard is way cooler.

The actual environments have been improved, and you can see way farther into the distance than you could in, er, "*1 Xtreme*," but the biggest graphical upgrade has been given to the skaters themselves. They're now either digitized people or motion-captured so well it's impossible to tell the difference. My only complaint regarding *2 Xtreme*'s visuals at this early stage in its development is that no locale, except perhaps Las Vegas, makes you think you're really racing in what

it purports to be. In Africa you could be sailing through the Grand Canyon but for the rather small-looking pachyderms blocking the road, and Japan could easily be Sweden or Germany. It's a small objection, as the extraordinary scenery will be flying by so fast you'll hardly notice.

The gameplay remains largely the same, with a couple of additions: a revamped scoring system that gives you points not only for knock-downs, passing through gates or finishing, but for performing aerial tricks with button combinations, and power-ups that increase health, speed, strength and jumping prowess. Also, the number of tracks has been increased from five to twelve. *2 Xtreme* is looking good, and I can already say that fans of the first game will be more than happy with this one. As soon as we get a final version we'll have the review, so keep looking to GameFan Sports for an update! **NR**



POWER MOVE

PRO WRESTLING

GAMEFAN
SPORTS

R
REVIEW



DEVELOPER - MASAYA

PUBLISHER - ACTIVISION

FORMAT - CD

OF PLAYERS - 1-2

DIFFICULTY - BEG. - ADV.

AVAILABLE - NOW

Thanks to Activision, American gamers are about to experience the finest wrestling game ever made. Known as *Toukon Retsuden* in Japan, it's finally showing up over here (un-licensed), as *Power Move Wrestling*. This is a powerhouse 3D wrestler with some of the hottest gameplay available in any sports game.

One look at the pictures on this page should be enough to hook you, but until you've experienced wrestling in a full 3D environment, pictures can't do *PMW* justice. The twelve wrestlers, four rings, and four arenas are constructed of 3D texture-mapped, gouraud shaded polygons. Everything runs at 30 fps, so the wrestlers animate perfectly and the ring pans and zooms flawlessly. Since the whole game is moving in 3D, *PMW* offers two horizontal and two vertical views to help you keep track of the action.

The hot graphics should keep any wrestling fan happy, but there's enough gameplay here for even the most die-hard fan. You can slam a friend in vs. mode, enter the Power Move Pro Wrestling championship, league, or tournament, and play it all in four difficulty levels. I spent most of my time in the vs. mode, but I've been playing and saving as I progress through the other modes too, and find them equally addicting, much like a polished fighter. The control is so perfect, it almost becomes second nature. Even the most complex moves are easily executed and the response is instant. Perform spectacular flying moves in the ring and off the ropes, and then sit back in complete control of the camera and play it all back. It's like watching TV. *PMW* has one of the best replay options I've ever seen. From the lock up position, pull off slams, suplexes, drops, and throws (into the ropes or outta the ring), then when the challenger's down, bring on the crabs, arm-breakers, and painful submissions. You can fight outside the ring as dirty as you'd like, for a limited time. Change views and follow the concrete pounding action from every angle.

The bottom-line: This is the best wrestling game I've ever seen or played. The wrestlers are cool, the 3D: amazing, and the play mechanics are incredible. Even the ring announcer sounds awesome! I urge all wrestling fans and newcomers alike to feel the power of *Power Move Wrestling*. **G**



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NFL'97

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"No matter how much or how little you know about the video game industry, I'm sure we can all agree on two things: The industry produces way too much junk, and the industry can never realize its true potential as long as its products are regarded by the mainstream media as children's toys."

- Miyaji, president of GameArts and now president of ESP, has an idea about how to change all this.



EXCLUSIVE GAMEFAN INTERVIEW WITH ESP - THE CREATORS OF GD NET

You may never have heard of GD-NET or ESP, but it's a sure bet that their influence will extend far beyond the number of quality games they will inevitably produce. If successful, ESP could stand as a new model for the maturing video game industry, taking the industry's true power out of the hands of financiers, and putting it in the hands of developers, where it belongs.

The hot news in Japan is the formation of GD NET, a game designer's network, including the following 9 companies: Alpha System, Quintet, GameArts, CSK, Sting, Treasure, Japan Art Media, Neverland Company, and Bits Laboratory (see the individual company histories in last month's issue). I will be interviewing these companies and will be bringing them to you as a series starting with ESP and GameArts this month.



Mr. Youichi Miyaji, PRESIDENT OF ESP & GAMEARTS, is concerned not only with creating quality games for his own company, but in recreating the entire industry through ESP.

GF: First of all, please tell us what motivated you to establish ESP?

ESP: I think the most important thing you need to do to make good games is to bring up good producers. A producer needs to know about game production, business, and financial matters. I think these are the three essential elements needed to be a producer. A producer has to have absolute authority on all matters that apply to his product. But, in Japan, this kind of construction has not yet been established. I don't know about the US, though. Anyway, in reality, the most important thing is always money. And since the person who's providing the funding and the producer are different people, the person who is funding will cut in, and end up producing, even though he doesn't know about

games - and what do you think is going to happen? The final product ends up being something you can't even look at. Sometimes the financial interests will demand they publish the product, even when it's only halfway done. The product will be awful!

The movie industry has well-balanced relationships between the creator and publisher. This union produces great products, and makes the audience happy. Looking at this, I think it's clear that the producer is the most important. I think you need to have one very responsible person that can bet their life on the project, and have full control. Otherwise the product will be garbage.

The only people that can be doing all of these things are the presidents of production companies. They know all about financing, sales, and publishing. That's why this company is organized by the presidents of software producers. All of these people were only developers before, and were told from the top to "make this game with this much money." Since the finances and creative control are handled by an outside company, the producers could make a product, but not a true piece of art. So, we established this company to make an environment for producers to be free to create games for themselves.

GF: How long have you been thinking about this?

ESP: Since about 5 years ago. I didn't start the actual planning, or telling people about it until last summer.

GF: Well, then why is it organized with these 9 companies?

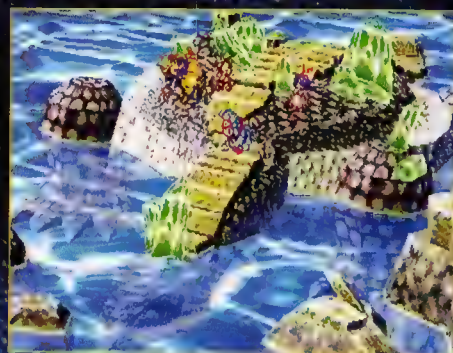
ESP: Well, they are my friends of course, but they all have been thinking about exactly same thing. Everyone thought they were restricted when they were just developers, so everyone wanted to create their own product and take their own chances.

GF: Please tell us the pluses and minuses for the developers who join GD-NET?

ESP: Each company can enhance their company's individuality and create the products they choose. I think a product has to have individuality. I can't think of any minuses.

GF: So, who will manufacture and sell the games?

ESP: ESP will act as the sales agency, but the indi-



vidual companies will take responsibility for manufacturing the titles. Let me give you an example. About five or six years ago, I visited a certain company. This one game, which is now world famous, had just been developed. The game's producer presented his product at an executive meeting, but the executives said "There is no way we can sell this kind of game, so forget it." But this producer's wife and kids were playing this game every day, and loved it. So he said, "Please let me handle it, I'll bet my life on this product." Then, when the game finally went on sale, it sold millions.

The point is, no matter how many MBA's these executives had, they couldn't have understood this because they don't play games. The process is even more severe in the US, where people who make decisions usually have never even played the game, and can't help misjudging things. As far as I'm concerned, they make mistakes because they have none of the "producers" I talked about earlier.

The movie industry in Hollywood has this completely down, but the game industry in the US hasn't got it yet. In my opinion, Hollywood became successful because they had a well-balanced relationship between creators and producers. If it is not constructed well, great directors like Akira Kurosawa can't be brought up. So, ESP is not just another company - we established an organization that thinks seriously about reconstructing the industry in order to make great games.

For example, if you need 10,000,000,000 yen (\$100,000,000) (100 million) to create one game, do you think ordinary companies can afford this? What would you do? If it's Hollywood, they have the organizational structure necessary to collect \$100,000,000 easily. There is a possibility that expenses will get this high in the game industry.



"ESP IS NOT JUST ANOTHER COMPANY, WE ESTABLISHED AN ORGANIZATION THAT THINKS SERIOUSLY ABOUT RECONSTRUCTING THE INDUSTRY IN ORDER TO MAKE GREAT GAMES"

"THIS INDUSTRY WILL BE DESTROYED IF PEOPLE THINK THESE ARE ONLY KID'S TOYS. THAT'S NOT TRUE AT ALL. THIS IS AN INDUSTRY OF CULTURE. MOVIES ARE PART OF CULTURE, TOO."



pretty soon, after DVDs are released. To make the environment necessary to provide such financing in the future, we need to start changing the industry now. Right now, all an average game needs is about \$1 million, but if you compare that to 10 years ago, all we needed was \$100,000. 10 times more in 10 years. So, I think that'll rise to \$10 million within 3 or 4 years, and from \$10 million to \$100 million in another 3 or 4 years. Now is the time to change it. If a project is going to cost \$10 million, they'll need to get together investment funds. If that's the case, we need to build up relationships and experience with venture capital, publishers, distributions, etc., otherwise we can't create good products. I'm not saying everyone should make big titles, I'm just saying it will be necessary to be capable of making big titles. It is easy to understand ESP if you look at us from this perspective.

GF: How about other people's opinions about ESP?

ESP: I think even Sega and SCE welcomed us. Increased quality is good for everyone in the industry. It is important to be able to make good product. What's to disagree with in that?

I think the only people who will be negative about us are competitors, but there are none. Though ESP is a company, it's really presenting a new way of being a game company.

GF: So it's not about creating an ESP brand?

ESP: No, we are just presenting a new construction for making games. I don't think many ordinary developers can afford to make high quality CD-ROM games. I just think that we need a producer who can handle funding, profits, and coordinate things like that. If we don't have it, it will affect our future in the game industry. Neither Japan or the US has this construction. I think publishers in the US are irresponsible about it. The game industry in the US is screwed up as well, right?

This industry will be destroyed if people think these are just kid's toys. That's not true at all, this is an industry of culture. Movies are part of culture, too. I think Hollywood was the first to realized the importance of this construction.

GF: So, you just concentrate on those 9 companies?

ESP: No, no. If other companies approached us, I'd have no problem. Even American companies. We're just trying to introduce a new approach, and some new ideas.

GF: Isn't there a possibility that other companies will be impressed by your idea and try to establish the same type of companies in the future?

ESP: I don't mind at all. I welcome them to do that. That would mean our thinking was right. That's why people copy established companies. I think that this industry would be better if this became the main form of construction. You use other people's ideas, that's business. I simply think that today's style is wrong and my way is better for everyone.

I think imitation of an idea is everything, like Seven-Eleven. In Japan, large supermarkets were incredibly powerful. Everyone thought that convenience stores were too small - and they definitely thought that they wouldn't last in Japan. So, 7-11 went through trial and error and now convenience stores dominate Japan. That's not the best example, but the point is that someone has to guide these companies. If this plan fails, ESP will be worthless. But if it succeeds, and people realize that this way of thinking is the way to make a great product, everyone will start doing it. You know, there are so many awful games coming out, I think this is the way to break that situation.

GF: So tell us briefly, what is ESP?

ESP: We just want this industry to become an industry which creates great products, that's all. I actually don't care if boring games are released, or games that just target small niches. A game about cockroaches is available in the US, I like that [He's referring to the PC game *Bad Mojo*. I think -Ed.]. There are just too many losses in the industry, such as not releasing games that would sell, or releasing half-finished games. The reason this happens is because there are too many pressures from businessmen. So, we need to make an industry for the people, by the people (laughs), otherwise this industry won't grow. Even the movie industry has been supported by people who loves movies. There are so many people involved in this industry who don't like games. It's just because you can make money, that's all. People with MBA's think that the game industry is a good place for them to make money. I suppose that's ok, but don't you think we've had enough of those type of people by now? Those types are always thinking things like, "A genre called RPG seems to be doing well... Ok, let's make RPGs and make money. Make an RPG!" The creators don't even want to make an RPG, but since

it's an order, they copy someone else's game and release it. Of course it's going to sell a little bit. Then the businessmen would say, "Why do *Final Fantasy* and *Dragon Quest* sell so much, but not ours? Do they have more skilled people?" No, no, no, that's not it! It's all about the heart. Products with heart will sell, I think. I think we need people who love games and take them seriously to make this industry bigger. That's what Hollywood's like, right?

GF: Will any other companies be able to join?

ESP: Definitely. America, Europe, Taiwan, Hong Kong, Korea, it doesn't matter where they're from. We've had a number of Taiwanese companies approach us, and 2 or 3 more from Japan.

GF: Are you thinking about establishing a subsidiary in the US?

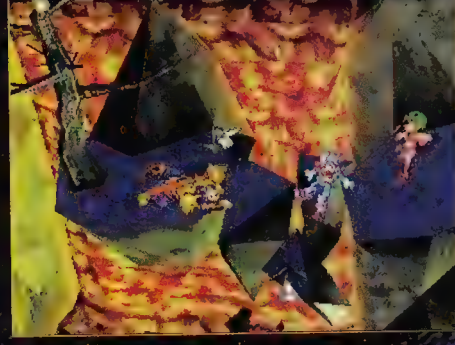
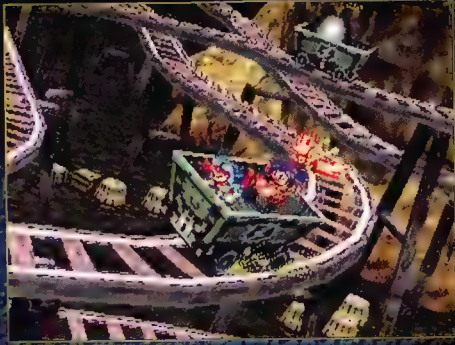
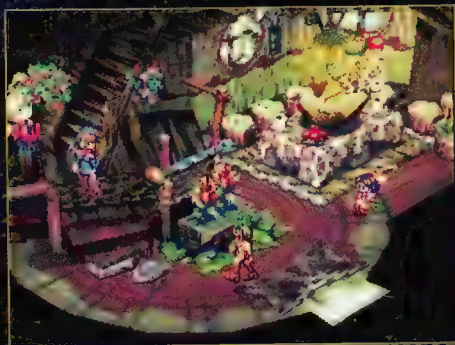
ESP: No, not a subsidiary or anything like that. I want to establish the idea itself, for American companies to get investment funds like we do and establish a similar company (like ESP). Since everyone would be investing, it would be everyone's company, like a union. If there are any American companies that are interested, I will work with them.

GF: Forgive me if I'm wrong, but it looks like ESP is leaning towards Sega...

ESP: Exactly. That's a strategic decision. PS users are becoming general users. Those general users buy 2 to 3 games per system that they own. Then they get bored with them and turn to other interests. In Japan, Saturn and PlayStation have the same market share, but PS has more general users. So, actual game enthusiasts buy Saturn over PS. Those people collect games, so they buy 10 or more games for each system that they own. To appeal to those type of people, Saturn is the suitable system. Saturn users are generally seriously looking for good games, which is not usually the case for PS users. PS users watch TV commercials and buy games. I think those Saturn users could be opinion leaders, because core users of Saturns tend to also have PlayStations. PS users usually don't have Saturns. So, these people can't be opinion leaders, and they just say, "Oh, this is a good game..." So, until we establish our status, we value those core users. The next step will be to try to appeal to general users.

Good product is common to the entire world.

GF: Thank you.



INTERVIEW WITH GAMEARTS - THE FIRST IN OUR GD NET SERIES!



Mr. Toshiyuki Uchida CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER OF GAMEARTS

The man who supports GameArts from the background. He also collects vitamins.

GF (Game Fan): Why did you decide to remake the Lunar games for Saturn, instead of simply starting anew with Lunar 3?

GA (Game Arts): First of all, we were 100% satisfied with the final product of Lunar 2. But after that, when we looked over Lunar 1, we all came to the same opinion, that we could've done more with Lunar 1. So we decided to work on part 1 one more time, and, as you will find out when you play it, this one is even better than Lunar 2. Of course, it's naturally going to be better on the Saturn over the Sega CD, but we've made every aspect of the game - quality, scenario, sound, animation - first class. Therefore, to answer your question, the best answer is to actually play it.

GF: Why did you consign this game to Kadokawa Shoten to release it?

GA: We wanted to expand our presence into many different mediums, so we decided it would be good to work with Kadokawa Shoten. (Kadokawa Shoten is a very famous Japanese publishing house, and their union with GameArts has also produced various books, manga, etc.)

GF: What changes have been made, compared to the original Lunar?

GA: There are just too many to mention. It's a totally different game.

GF: So, you mean the story is the same, but everything else is different?

GA: No, everything is different. We changed the whole thing, even the story. I guarantee you that people will be moved to tears when they play this game (laughs).

GF: Has the music also been improved?

GA: Like I said, everything has been powered up. All I can say is you won't understand unless you play it. There's about three times as much

of everything. Think of it as a 30+ hour masterpiece movie. Except, since movies are usually only about 2 hours, it's hard to draw fully-realized characters and settings. Since we chose to make Lunar as a video game, we could draw a much more fully realized world.

GF: What is the game's main sales point?

GA: I think that it will make everyone who plays it very happy.

GF: But there's no one aspect over all others that will make people say "Wow! This is awesome!"?

GA: Well there are many very memorable scenes, but no one area that really stands out. You know the feeling when you see a really good movie, and you're like, "Wow, I'm really glad I saw that." It's like that. It doesn't matter what system it's on, it's just the feeling that, "I'm glad I've spent so much time playing this game."

GF: So, you mean you want consumers see this as a piece of work that surpasses all formats?

GA: Yes, all I want is for consumers to see that this is a piece of art that happens to be expressed as a video game.

It's the storyline that I have the most confidence in. I don't know what the English version will be like, but I tried to build this story out of the fundamental feelings that every human has, so I think everyone will love it. Things like love, courage, and the spirit of adventure. This isn't the usual save-the-world type story. You don't care about that sort of thing. It's like you want to save a girl that you love and happen to save the world along the way. In Lunar, when you're asked "Which would you choose, to save your girl [Luna] or the world," you choose Luna. Of course there will be many bad guys in the game, but even the bad guys are living within the realm of human reason, and from their perspective, they're really not that bad at all. Of course, those guys wouldn't understand things like the power of trust. I'm pretty sure that American people will also be fascinated by this story. Nowadays, it's become hard to judge what's good and what's bad. This story is not encouraging the good and punishing the evil. This is not a preaching kind of story. It's an emotional story made with sincere human feelings.

We want the player to feel that they're gradu-

ally falling in love [with Luna], and then the feeling of "I have to save her" comes naturally. And also, in American comics, the bad guys are all truly evil, aren't they? But it's not like that in Lunar... The villains are like real people, and if you see things from their viewpoint, they're the one's who are right. You have to compare what's good and bad from each character's perspective. For that reason, I think this is a very adult story. It's not for kids.

GF: So you mean the target age of this game is...

GA: Probably 18, 19, or older. I'm pretty sure that that age group will be purchasing it the most. So, we are not targeting kids. It is about the romance with love and courage, but we didn't make this game to fawn to kids. Adults can handle this game, so I think that 20 to 30 year-olds are the ones who will be happy with this game. Of course, kids are always looking upwards, so even 12 year-old kids would have fun with what 18 year-old kids are playing with. Don't you remember when you were 12 years old? Weren't you interested in adult stuff?

So, we can't fool people with this story. Even Disney movies are not targeting kids only. Adults can certainly understand and have fun with their stories. If Disney only targeted kids, they wouldn't have to spend that much money and insist on such high quality.

GF: By the way, when's the release date for Lunar?

GA: October 25th.

GF: Please tell us more about Lunar the Magic School (Mahogakuen).

GA: This is a gaiden (a supplementary story). We will use the actual Lunar environment, but all of the characters are different. If 1 and 2 were epic dramas, this Magic School is like a weekly TV high school drama. I just wanted to make a high school drama about the school of magic. There are teachers and students, and the students grow up as you play. A lot of the production staff is different from the regular Lunar team, and it's become a game with a definite comedic touch.

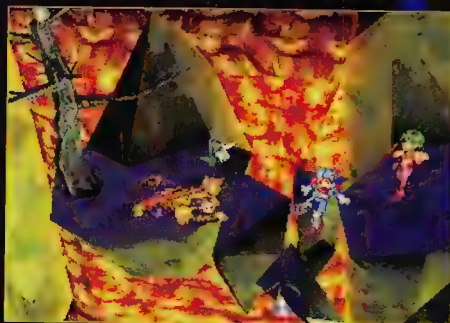
GF: How about Lunar 3?

GA: I can't say anything, except that the changes won't be any more dramatic than they were in the change from Lunar 1 to Lunar 2.

GF: And Lunar 2 is also going to be released on the Saturn?

GA: Yes, Lunar 2 is almost done. We will release Lunar 2 around June '97 and after that we'll either release 3 or something totally new. We haven't decided yet.

GF: Thank you very much.

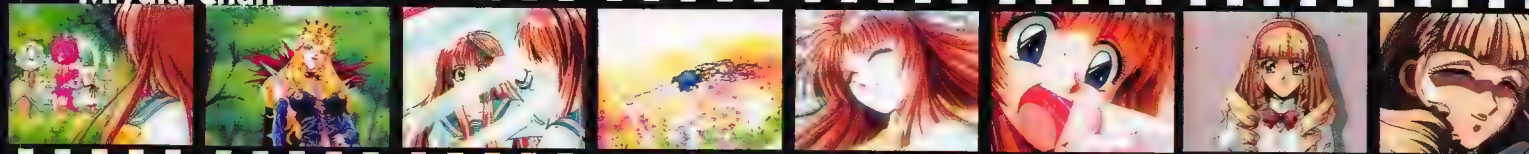


NOTE: The more sophisticated readers of GameFan will already have noticed that the game shots that accompany this interview are actually taken from another forthcoming GameArts product entitled Grandia. The latest shots of Lunar: the Silver Star Story will be shown in the next issue. Sorry Folks!

**NEXT MONTH: EXCLUSIVE! "SOLO CRISIS" ON THE SATURN!
INTERVIEW WITH QUINTET - THE CREATORS OF ACTRAISER!**

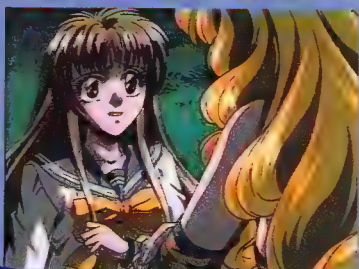
GRANDIA





TAKUHI'S

Hey there, friends! I know this column's been away for the last couple of months, but believe me, you haven't been missing much. Although *Evangeli*on's finally out, and there are still a lot of good continuing series, most of the stuff we've been receiving lately has either been rereleases, old 80's stuff, or porn. It's pretty funny, really... The best animation I've seen this month was in *Sakura Taisen*, *Policenauts*, and *Psychic Force*! But hey, let's sift through this month's pile, there's got to be something good there, right? And I'll see you next month with *Panzer Dragoon* and a bunch of other treats (hopefully).



This cute little tape is brief, with only two 15-minute episodes,

but has a lot of energy and good ideas. It's basically the

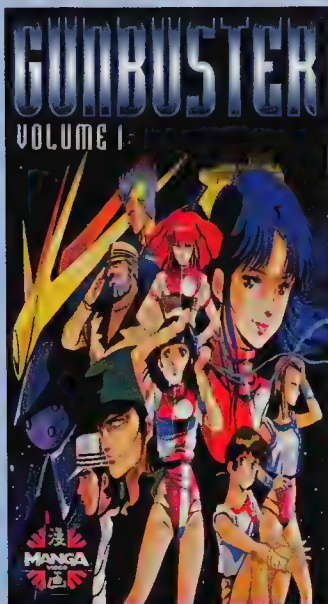
old Alice in Wonderland storyline, but all of Lewis Carroll's classic characters are now attractive, busty, scantily-clad women. Okay, so the poor old guy's probably turning over in his grave right now, but everything in *Miyuki-chan* is pretty tasteful. After all, the entire thing was written and drawn by women, and not just any women, but the very talented women of CLAMP (who brought us *X* and *RayEarth*, among others).

There's not much dialogue, and the pace is pretty frantic, but the animation quality is good and the whole thing keeps you on your toes while it lasts, which isn't very long. If you can get past the endlessly looping and incredibly annoying soundtrack, *Miyuki-chan* is definitely worth a look, but nothing to get too excited about.



Gunbuster





This one's been available for years, but it's just been rereleased and I've found it especially interesting in light of *Evangelion*, the masterpiece this same team went on to create. Of course, *Gunbuster* (Aim For the Top!) dates back to 1988, and the animation certainly isn't going to impress anyone spoiled by today's high standards.

But good stories never get old, and *Gunbuster*'s was a classic. *Evangelion* fans will see much reminiscent of that series' style, but the well-drawn characters and the highly emotional storyline can easily be enjoyed by anyone. This is one of the few classics that any anime aficionado should be familiar with.

Hey, I'll level with you guys here... I really couldn't care less about most of the so-called classics out there, but I know a lot of people

hold much of Japan's early 80's output with much reverence. As for me, well, whenever I see so-called "Japanimation" that has production

standards less than that of *Scooby Doo*, well, it sends a shiver down my spine.

Armored Trooper Votoms falls right into that category. It's not for me, but if you're a fan of classic animation, and can enjoy *Votom*'s storyline without minding the cheap animation and annoying sound-track, well, more power to you.



Before the now (somewhat) famous *Patlabor* movies, there was Mamoru Oshii's long-running TV series. Although it's a good eight years old now, its high animation standards and excellent Oshii direction make it relevant even today.

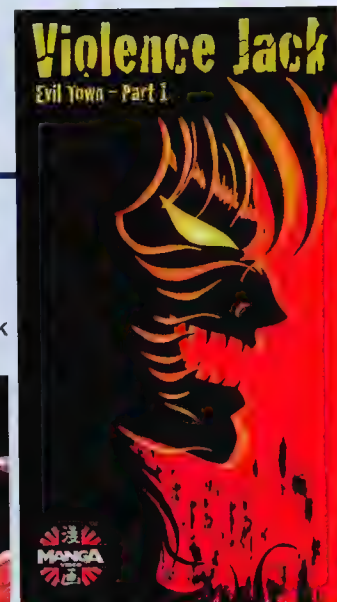
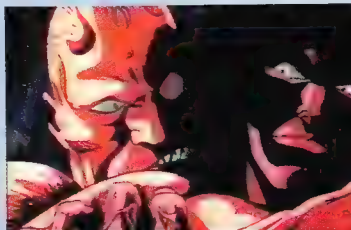
The story is similar to that of the movies, but with a heavier emphasis on character development and action, as opposed to the obsession with incredibly intricate plotlines that made the movies simultaneously fascinating and somewhat dull. That formula works well in the

TV series, and although there are countless better anime series out there, there are certainly a ton of worse ones as well.

Like *Cutey Honey* and *Devilman*, *Violence Jack* is the work of one of anime's founding fathers, Go Nagai. The back of *Violence Jack*'s box describes him as a "master of the macabre," and that's a pretty fitting description. But I can think of a better one: that guy is one messed-up, dirty old man. And though that would usually be accompanied by a wink and a grin coming from me, I definitely don't intend for it to be complimentary in this case.

Violence Jack is possibly the most tasteless bit of anime I've ever seen

(and that is saying a LOT), an amazing feat considering how little action it actually has. The storyline is worthless, the characters are ridiculous, and the animation is beyond cheap. Unless you're a big fan of rape, dismemberment, and various combinations of the two, you're not going to find anything with any redeeming value in this piece of trash.



Patlabor

Violence Jack



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Dear Postmeister:

I've never written to you before, and I was wondering if you would be so kind as to shed some of your divine light on a few of my humble questions. The questions are in order of decreasing importance, so I'd be exceedingly happy if you would go so far as to answer even the first row. Well, here we go:

1) I heard Crystal Dynamics is making *Ghost Rider* for the PlayStation. Well, *Ghost Rider* happens to be my favorite comic book, and I happen to have a Saturn. Any chance of seeing it on Saturn? We don't want any dissatisfied customers around here, now, do we?

2) Are you guys going to review the Saturn import *Metal Black*, or is this one of those cases (like with *Don Pachi*) where it's too BAD to even consider reviewing? What about *Shinrei Jusatsu Taromaru*? Will GameFan review *Strikers 1945*? That I HAVE played and I think it's very good, but too short. What do you think?

3) In "Other Stuff," I read about *Castlevania* coming to PlayStation. Is Konami going to be lame about not putting out a Saturn version, or will we at least see it on the Japanese Saturn?

4) Say for instance that Capcom does release some of their upcoming fighters on the N64, like *Street Fighter III*, *SF Alpha III*, and *Darkstalkers II*. What would be the chance of seeing them on any 32-bit systems?

5) In the Gen 32 section, it says "*KoF '95* and *Samurai Shodown III* will both be exclusive to the PlayStation before the Saturn versions hit (if they hit at all...)." It's that last part that hit me... "if they hit at all." I thought a Saturn version was definite? Damn it, am I smelling some "PlayStation favoritism" among these game companies?

6) Are there any more shooters on the way for the 32-bit systems? New ones, re-released ones? How about conversions of *Alpha Plus*, *Saint Dragon*, *Strato Fighter*, or *19XX*? And when's *Darius Gaiden II* coming?

7) This is going to sound kind of silly, but you know what I wouldn't mind seeing on the 32-bit systems? You got it, *Adventures of Bayou Billy 2*! Now THAT would make my day!

Well, that's it for now. If you don't print any of my questions, at least my concerns would have been heard, and perhaps shared, by someone in your LOFTY positions (at the very least I hope they entertained you). I'm also bugging some of the game companies out there with letters, so don't think I'm just using you to empty out my complaints on. Now I think I'll go and write Capcom, Konami, etc. some letters of "Titanic" proportions. "Throat Warbler Mangrove"

Ventura, CA

Ah, it does the Postmeister good to receive a letter from such a polite and respectful young... um... Warbler. Ah, Warblers... Such beautiful birds, and they're good-eating, too! But anyway, yes, I suppose you HAVE entertained the great Postmeister with your silly little questions, and as I'm in a generous and giving mood, I will deign to answer each and every one of them.

1) Well, I have good news for you! *Ghost Rider* has been cancelled. Hmm, well, it's good news in a spiteful, nasty sort of way, I suppose.

2) *Metal Black* wasn't particularly bad, it's just, you know, obscure, early '90s arcade shooters. Who really cares? Ditto with *Strikers*, in my opinion. We will review *Shinrei Jusatsu Taromaru* if it ever comes out. I'm starting to lose my patience with that one.

3) I'm afraid it's a PS-only project for the time being. It's certainly possible that they'll port it over when they're finished, though.

4) It's pretty unlikely that any of those will ever see the light of day on the N64. First of all, the CPS-III is a CD-based arcade system, and the required cartridge size would have to be beyond anything anyone's ever seen before. Secondly, Capcom has repeatedly expressed concern with the price of N64 carts, and have not thrown their full weight behind the system for that reason. Capcom of Japan president Kenzo Tsujimoto did say that they might reconsider after the release of the Bulky Drive, though (Capcom is working on at least one N64 title, but I don't think it's an arcade conversion). Anyway, even if Capcom did decide to make *SFIII* exclusive to the Bulky Drive, a perfect conversion would require over 3 discs (and possibly more 2D power than is capable on the N64), and that's not likely. So while you may start seeing Capcom 3D titles on the N64, their 2D titles would probably be better served on the 32-bitters.

6) Well, the only companies involved in this decision are Sony and Sega, and I'm guessing that at least one of them (Sony) is somewhat more partial to the PlayStation. The deal is that Sony paid SNK for the rights to release these games, plus a little something extra for the 3-month exclusive. Sega has yet to announce that they've licensed the games at all.

6) Haven't heard anything about either of those... But the next *Darius* game will be Taito's *G Darius*, their second PlayStation hardware-based arcade shooter. The first *Ray Storm* is coming out in Japan in January (and it's incredible, by the way). Let's hope Acclaim will release that here, and *G Darius* too, when that comes out.

7) Of all the 8-bit games to wish for a sequel of... Bayou Billy? To each his own, I suppose.

Dear Postmeister,

First off, GameFan is second to none in the gaming magazine industry. You people really do care, and it shows in your work, game reviews and previews, clear game shots, humor, etc... Great job! Now, my feelings about Capcom. They sure pissed off a whole lot of gamers when they cancelled *AD&D Tower of Doom*. This game was the reason I bought a PlayStation! A pox on Capcom for making such a stupid business decision!

But alas, a glimmer of hope, *Dragonheart*! I pray that this game is my saving grace. My only fear is that Acclaim is doing it, and my confidence is as shaky as a 500 pound man going ice-fishing on a small lake in mid-March... Crrraaccckkk... Splash!! Get my point? So please tell me your opinion of *Dragonheart*, and any possible action/adventure games in the future for PS, Saturn, or Nintendo 64.

Thanks,
John Gurnee
Appleton, WI

Well, Capcom claims that the conversion of *Tower of Doom* failed quality control, but I agree that they should keep trying. I mean, they have to get that out so they can begin work on *Shadow Over Mystaria*, which hasn't been announced for anything either. Haven't played *Dragonheart* yet, looks okay.

Dear Disgruntled Postmeister,

GameFan rules! Your anime section is awesome. Anyway, being a loyal Sega fan (you heard me right!), I have a few questions.

1) Will we ever see *Lunar 3*? Please say yes!
2) Will games like *Indy 500*, *Rail Chase 2*, and *Die Hard Arcade* be out on the Saturn?

3) Do you have the slightest idea how *Sonic X-Treme* is coming along?

4) Will any RPGs like *Albert Odyssey Gaiden*, *Lungrisser III*, *Phantasy Earth*, *Blue Seed* or *Wrinkle River Story* ever come to the US? 'Cause if not, I'm buying a converter and a Japanese college student to translate the stories.

5) Is the Saturn Universal Adapter worth buying?

6) Since *Virtua Fighter III* will be hard to convert for the Saturn, would it be possible to use a RAM cart to store the backgrounds? *King of Fighters '95* did. I think by doing this it would allow more room for character graphics.

7) Any news on a Saturn 64? If so, will it be an add-on or a separate system?

Sincerely,
Wes Ruscher
Mission Viejo, CA

1) Yes! but not for at least a year or so.

2) It seems that Sega's passed on *Indy 500*, and I've heard nothing about *Rail Chase 2*. But *Die Hard Arcade* is pretty likely, as it's running on Saturn hardware already.

3) Slowly, it seems. Sega's plans seem very ambitious, and that's why *Sonic X-Treme*'s been delayed until next year. It's still way too early to judge.

4) *Albert Odyssey Gaiden* is on its way from Working Designs, and I know a few companies are going for *Lungrisser III*.

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Blue Seed and Wrinkle River Story look like lost causes (trust me, you're not missing much), and Phantasy Earth's existence still has yet to be confirmed!

5) I haven't had any problems with it.

6) It's not memory that's the problem, it's the lack of polygon processing power. Rendered graphics take up very little memory, but Virtua Fighter III employs about ten times as many polygons as the Saturn can handle comfortably. An adequate translation would either require an unlikely programming miracle, or some sort of upgrade chip.

7) No news, and I'm sure there won't be any for a very, very long time.

Dear Postmeister,

We are so friggin' ticked that they took Sailor Moon off the air. Where do we send the bomb so they can get the message? The sailors rule! They're great influences on kids and my brother just absolutely loves their miniskirt outfits!

And what's the deal on Teknoman? They also took that off the air. It's getting to be that you can't turn on the screen to watch good anime anymore. And don't get my brother started on Dragon Ball.

And now, the games:

Enix, what's up with them? The Super N has been out for 5 years, and there hasn't been a single Dragon Quest game released on it. Well, not over here. And what about Square? No Romancing Saga 3? I hear both have quit bringing games over here, unless Sony brings them over.

Is there going to be a Dragon Force 2? The first is amazing. And what about Lunar the Silver Star Story?

On to box art... When my brother gets hold of the moron who drew the cover for Ranma 1/2 Hard Battle, he's going to strangle them. I don't blame him. I can draw it better. (Skip: "I'll rip them from limb to limb!") When somebody messes with Rumiko Takahashi's art, they deserve to be dragged out into the street, lynched, shot, connected with two trucks going in opposite directions, while doused with gasoline and set on fire (once again, my brother's two cents).

Oh yeah, there are girls that play video games. I'm one of them. My brother is going as Ryoga for Halloween. Need I say more about where his loyalties lie? Skip wants to ask if Devil Summoner is ever coming out, too. Well, that's our damage for the month. Continue to rock,

Tara the Soaring Hawk
& Skip the Godfather

Wow, clearly cartoons have been a great influence on you two. It's always good to see youngsters turn to violence to protect their network TV viewing habits... 'Cause hey, that's what America's all about! Speaking of violently defending viewing habits, I have some Sailor Moon-related messages to convey. I have no idea how my beloved letter page has turned into the Sailor Moon equivalent of the Soldier of Fortune want ads, as I really couldn't care less, but in the interest of inspiring the apathy-ridden youth of today to take a stand for something, and also to ensure the safe return of certain family members that have been taken hostage by the "Save Our Sailors" people, here goes: Whine to the Sailor Moon-cancelling folks at DIC at:

DIC Entertainment
Fan Appreciation Department
303 N. Glenoaks Blvd.
Burbank, CA 91502

and sign the virtual petition at <http://looney.physics.sunysb.edu/~daffy/sos>. These addresses from Derek Pryor and Cedric Ordenez. And hey, though I may grumble, I really do endorse the semi-noble quest of these Sailor Moon fans. But you better believe that if any DIC executives mysteriously vanish in the near future, I'll waste no time in directing the FBI to the home of "Soaring Hawk" and "the Godfather." Heh heh...

And getting back to their questions, Enix no longer exists on this side of the Pacific, so unless a company like Nintendo licenses their products, you're not going to be seeing any of their titles here. Square's back in business, though, although they're only considering their future PlayStation titles, none of the older classics. I don't think a Dragon Force 2 is in the works, but I know some of the members are at work on another simulation/RPG by the name of Terrafantasia, that Sega of Japan will be announcing soon. Sorry, Skip, but Devil Summoner's prospects depend on the success of Persona for the PlayStation, and you won't see it for a while, if at all... I know that's not what you wanted to hear, but, um, please... no reason to get violent... put down the knives...

Dear Postmeister,

As a die-hard RPG fan for the past ten years, I gotta say that I'm really sick of hearing companies make such statements as "RPGs do not sell in America" or "It's really hard to translate an RPG." Come on, we all know the reason RPGs do not sell is because they're usually outdated and of low quality.

1) I've heard a rumor saying that SCEJ has completely taken over the operation of SCEA and everything that's made by them is coming out here? Any truth to that?

2) Does SCEA have any other third party companies that make only RPGs,

besides Square?

3) Is SCEA planning on bringing RPGs other than Beyond the Beyond and Arc the Lad? How about Wild Arms and Popolocrois?

4) What's the chance of us (Americans) playing Final Fantasy Tactics, Saga Frontier, and other well-known Square RPGs in English? Is Square going to release only two games a year again?

5) I haven't heard about these two games for a while, is Konami still going to release Genso Suikoden and Policenauts on the US PlayStation? How about Breath of Fire 3 from Capcom?

6) Now that neither Enix or Square is with NOA, who else is going to support Nintendo 64 with RPGs?

7) Is there still a chance to see Dragon Quest 6 or Tactics Ogre on SNES? Or is Lufia 2 the end of the 16-bit era?

8) For the first time I'm really thinking about getting a Saturn because of all the RPGs. Do you think either Sony or Nintendo is going to prevent me from making the biggest mistake in my short-lived life by countering this RPG attack from Sega?

Daniel Lin
Placentia, CA

1) No, nothing like that. But they have been a lot more open to fringe games lately.

2) When you have Square, do you need any one else?

3) They're thinking about them. Wild Arms looks pretty likely.

4) We'll see... Supposedly this is a whole new Square with a whole new staff and exciting new priorities and all of that, but I'll believe it when I see it.

5) Ah, Konami's still on our side. Genso should be out immediately, and shortly following (early '97) will be another PlayStation strategy/RPG, Vandalhearts (much more on that one next month) and Policenauts for the Saturn (but not the PlayStation). Breath of Fire 3 should hit at around the same time frame.

6) Enix is still with Nintendo, at least for now. Rumor has it that they'll be taking Dragon Quest elsewhere, but they have at least one RPG (of sorts) coming for the N64 (Wonder Project J 2), and supposedly a few more in the works. Nintendo's working on Zelda and Mother (Earthbound) 3.

7) I'm sorry, friend. But sometimes you just have to let them go...

8) Sega's RPG attack isn't proving to be as ferocious as I might have hoped... A lot of titles for every system are being announced, but very few of them materialized. In my opinion, Sony's on top right now with Suikoden and Persona, but if Working Designs can start getting their line-up out there (Dragon Force, BayEarth, and Lunar), then Sega's definitely still in it.

And that brings another lovely episode of the Postmeister to an end. A brief note to readers. It's not that I only publish questions about RPGs and Sailor Moon, it's that that's all I GET. I used to have such great variety letters from psychos obsessed with all manner of things. What's up, people? The Postmeister loves you all. Well not you Jaguar people, but everyone else! Write in! Seize your moment of glory! The Postmeister is waiting!



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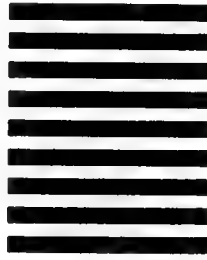
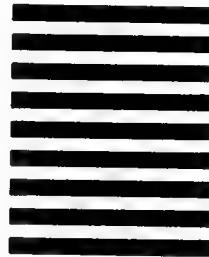
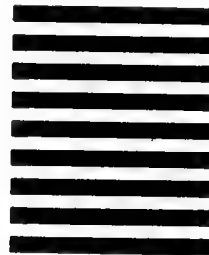
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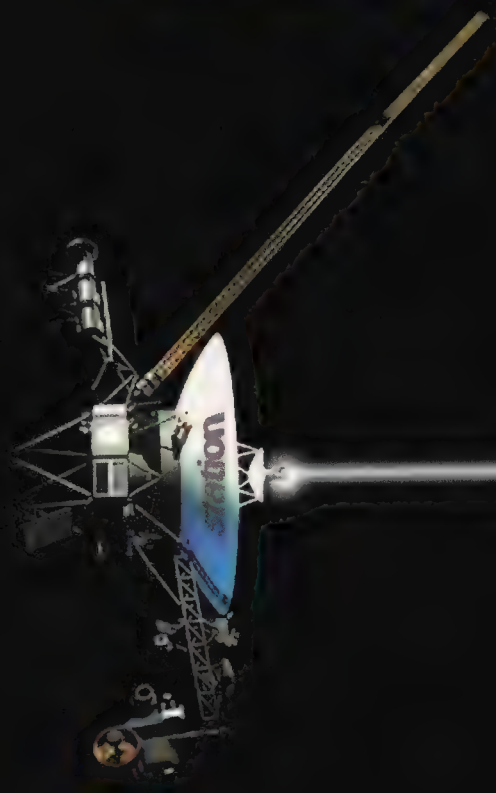
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In celebration of the recent launch of the Nintendo 64 here's all the info we could dig up. PS: We looked under a lot of rocks.

It's the end of the year and the whole industry is buzzing over the record-breaking two day sales of the N64. On September 29th and 30th Nintendo sold approximately 350,000 units: 150,000 pre-sales, and 200,000 walk-in purchases. Nintendo is also set to release a further 300,000 units on October 11th. According to sources at NOA, Nintendo will release a further 300,000 units every 3 to 4 weeks accordingly until the end of the year. Nintendo estimates that the total number of units sold by the new year could be as high as 1.2 million.

RUMORS, RUMORS, RUMORS... NOT!

The biggest story floating around is that the US version of *SM64* may be released in Japan as *Super Mario 64 Special*. For some reason Miyamoto feels that the extra voice and fixed bugs constitutes a more 'complete' version of the game that true fans will not want to be without. Besides that, sources at NOA recently disclosed that the Japanese version of *SM64* was not 64 megs as previously reported, but 52 megs. The US version, on the other hand, was actually 64 megs.

N64 LODERUNNER?

Yes, it's true. A company named Big Bang Software (based in Bellevue, Washington) is working on a N64 version of the timeless platform/puzzle classic *Lode Runner*. This version will feature real time 3D and multiple *Super Mario 64*-style camera angles. Production has just begun, so don't expect to see anything on *Lode Runner 64* until the 1st quarter of 1997. We'll keep you posted. Not.

VIC TOKAI JOINS THE N64 TEAM!

Another fighting game is on its way to the N64 courtesy of Krono Digital Entertainment, the team responsible for *Eternal Champions 2*. *Dark Rift* was shown at the Alias/Wavefront booth of the Japanese Tokyo SIGGRAPH show a couple of weeks ago, and spectators who saw the demo reported that it was graphically on a par with *SM64*. The gameplay might need a little work though. In spite of this we have an interview lined up with KDE for next month, along with some shots of the game. Vic Tokai is looking for a 1st quarter release of *Dark Rift*, so stay tuned...

PLAYER 1, WILLIAMS SECRET WEAPON?

After only 2 months of work on the N64 version of *Robotron X*, developer Player 1 is almost ready to start work on the N64 version of... wait for it... *Joust 3D*! While the concept and game design are nearly complete, Player 1 has informed me that they still need a few more weeks of planning before programming can begin. The game will feature real time 3D arenas, and best of all, a split screen two player mode with special arenas designed specifically for two player battles. The game isn't due for release until late '97, with a PC CD-ROM and PlayStation version also planned.

NINTENDO TO DELAY GAMES AGAIN?

Yep, you read that correctly. Nintendo is pushing back the Japanese release dates of some of their key titles. Below is a list of Nintendo's official Japanese release dates for the next three months, along with the US dates. Read on...

Tetris Sphere

JP: Jan. US: Feb.

Shadows of the Empire

JP: Nov. US: Dec. 2nd

Golden Eye

JP: Jan/Feb US: Feb/Mar

Blast Corps

JP: Dec/Jan US: Feb.

Body Harvest

JP: Mar. US: Mar.

Super Mario Kart R

JP: Dec. US: Jan.

Buggie Buggy

JP: Summer '97 US: Summer '97

StarFox 64

JP: Mar./Apr. US: Jun./Jul.

Climber

JP: Apr. US: May

Kirby's Air Ride

JP: Jan./Feb. US: 2nd qtr. '97

F-Zero 64

JP: May/Jun. US: Jul./Aug.

Yoshi's Island 64

JP: Mar/Apr. US: May/Jun.

Well there you have it. Once again, Nintendo is incurring massive delays in its schedule, in some cases up to six months off the projected release date. The reason for this is that Nintendo is discovering too late in the game just how long it takes to develop a 64-bit title, especially a 3D one. As with *SM64*, Miyamoto has requested more time to fine tune the games under his production, and who are Nintendo to argue? Personally, I couldn't care what the reasons are, just as long as the games are good!

SHOSHINKAI '97

It's only a month away. Rumor has it

we'll witness the debut of *Zelda 64* for the 64DD, along with Capcom's official announcement that they ARE developing games for the N64. The Japanese press however, states that neither the 64DD nor *Zelda* will be present. There should also be playable versions of *Super Mario Kart 64*, *Yoshi's Island*, *Star Fox 64* and *F-Zero 64*. Rumor has it that a *Donkey Kong* game for N64 might be at the show, but only on video. Sources have also indicated that other 64DD games (maybe *Metroid 64*) might be at the show, but only if Nintendo is happy with the game's quality.

NAMCO JOINS CLUB N64

Namco has finally officially announced that they will be developing for the N64. The first 2 titles will be a sports game (*Family Stadium*) and an RPG (*Tails of Phantasia 64*). Namco has already started production on these titles, but only at the design stage. The first shots should be ready for May or June of next year, and the release of both games is planned for 4th quarter '97.

WILLIAMS LEAKS MORE N64 GAMES

Sources at Williams have revealed that *Mortal Kombat 4* is due for an arcade debut in either March or April of '97, with both a PlayStation and N64 version planned for 4th quarter '97. The other big news is that *San Francisco Rush*, Atari's new driving coin-op designed by the creators of *Race Drivin'* and *Hard Drivin'*, is also headed to the N64 for late '97. The arcade game runs on a 64bit R4400 chip designed by SGI, with a Voodoo Graphics chip that allows for up to 1,000,000 polygons with all the trimmings. There's no word on a PlayStation version yet, but the N64 version is expected to be a 90% copy.

Mario Kart 64 will make its debut at the Shoshinkai trade show in November!



The rest of the stuff....

SQUARE DELAYS FINAL FANTASY 7

The release date for *Final Fantasy 7* in Japan has been put back from late December to January 31, 1997, with no change in price (6800 Yen). Thankfully there has been no change in the US date - Square is still quoting March for both the PlayStation and Windows '95 versions. To date Square has spent an alleged \$20,000,000 on the production of *FFVII*, making it the most expensive video game ever! On a brighter note Sony has decided to release the demo disk of *FFVII* with *Tobal No. 1* over here. The translation is complete and looking set for release.

ENIX TO MAKE SATURN GAMES

Enix recently announced their 1997 lineup, including a number of surprises. 9 games were announced in total, 6 for N64 and a further 3 unknown titles. But sources are indicating that one of the 'unknown' titles will be none other than *Dragon Quest 7* for the Saturn! Information is scarce but I did manage to find out that one of the N64 titles is being developed by Quintet, the company behind *Actraiser* and its sequel. No word on any of the other games yet, but rumor has it that one of the other N64 games could be *Dragon Quest Gaiden*.



WARP has finally begun releasing actual screens of *D2*, their first M2 game. As you can see, no pixels are present and the game is running at a supposed 60fps. We'll have a report in Jan.



Burning Update:



And finally... post-review, Playmates did a very cool thing. Certain individuals didn't care for *Burning Road's* B-Univ-ish soundtrack. Chief H., for one, whined about it in last month's review. There was only one thing to do... track down Tommy Tallarico and have him whip up a hot US Remix. Playmates has done just that. What's better is that they left the original tunes in! Now you can decide, cheesy Daytona tunes or Metal. Hmmm... I'm torn.

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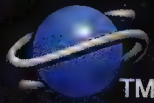
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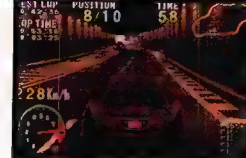
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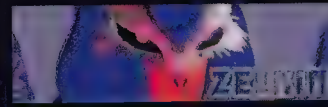
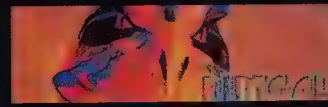
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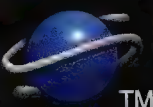
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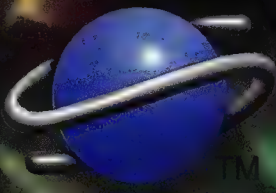


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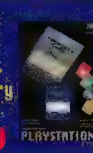
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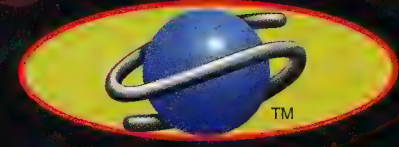
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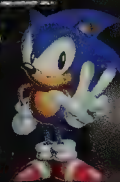
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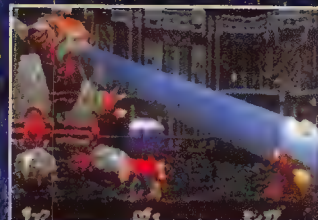


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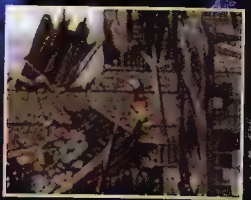
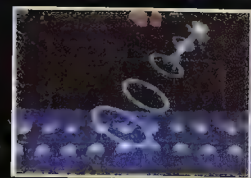
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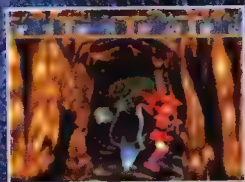


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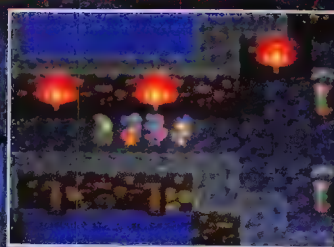
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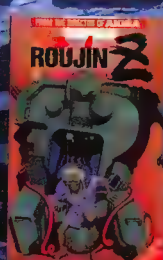
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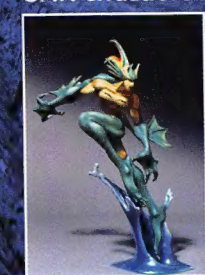
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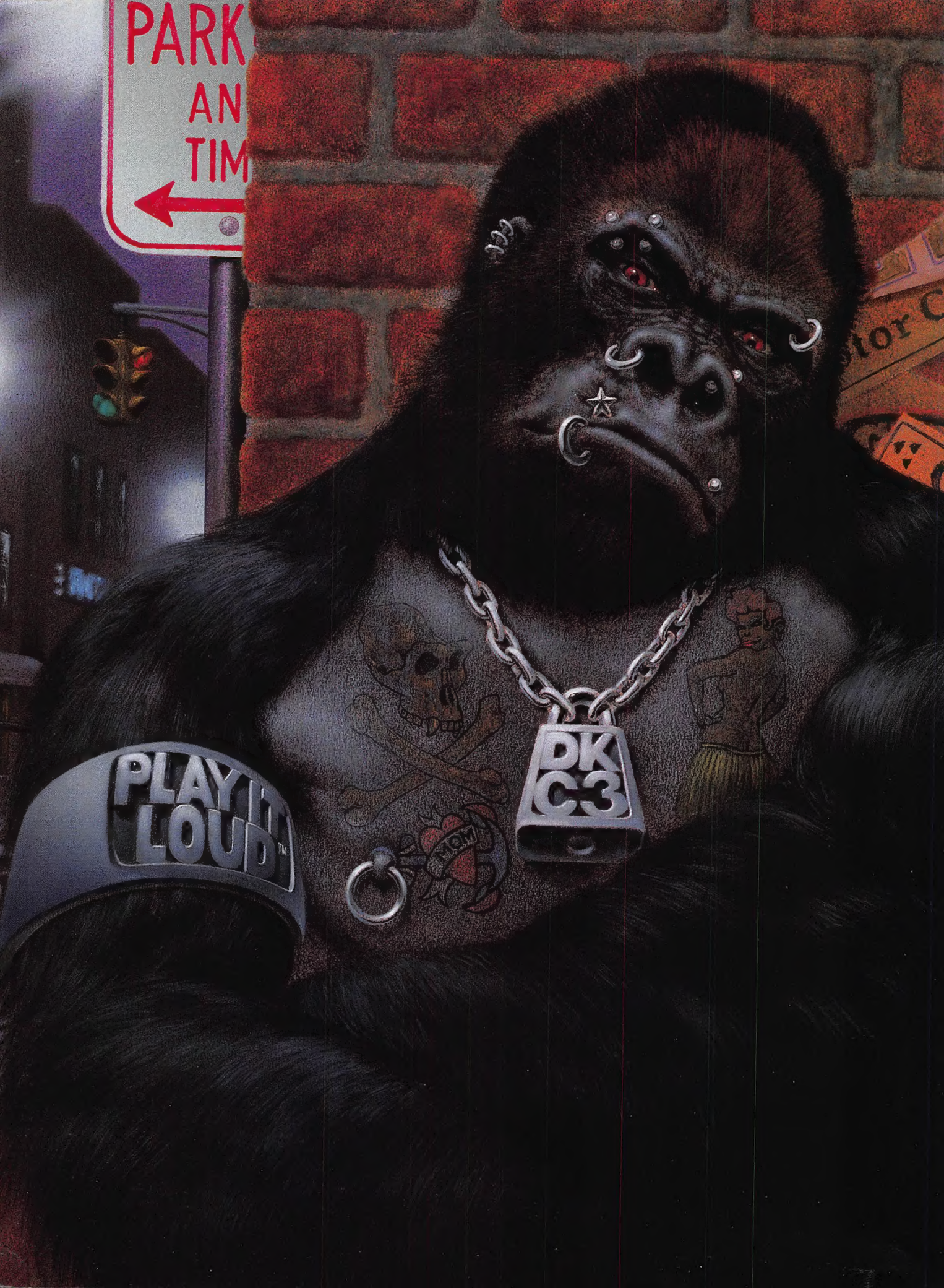
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